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**JANE LOMAX;**

OR

**A MOTHER'S CRIME.**

BY THE

**AUTHOR OF "BRAMBLETYE HOUSE,"**

**"REUBEN APSLEY," &c.**



———" Was 't not to make thee great,  
That I have run, and still pursue, these ways,  
That hale down curses on me?"

**MASSINGER.**

**IN THREE VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

**LONDON:**  
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452.



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## P R E F A C E.

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WHEN the reader learns that the following Tale was written three or four years ago, about which period the rage for what are termed Fashionable Novels had reached its culminating point, he may, perhaps, be surprised to find that its scenes are mostly laid in the unromantic purlieus of Bermondsey and Shad-Thames, and that its characters are entirely chosen from a class which has not been deemed either high enough or low enough to figure in our recent works of fiction. In the generality of these compositions, many of them evincing

the highest order of talent, the prominent personages bear sounding titles, maintain large establishments, and move only in the quarters consecrated to our aristocracy; the other actors in the drama being taken from inferior, not to say low, life, and rendered as vulgar and ridiculous as possible, that they may act as foils to their superiors.

Writers of this school, forgetting that there is an innate vulgarity, quite independent of external observances and forms, and quite as likely, therefore, to be encountered among the peerage as the peasantry, have confined it to certain conventional phrases, personal peculiarities, and domestic usages. Even if this narrow view be not opposed to Nature and to truth, it can hardly be denied that it has a mischievous tendency to widen the breach, where too great a severance and alienation of classes already forms the besetting sin of our social system.

## PREFACE.

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As the passions of our common nature are equally irrespective of birth and locality, the middling ranks and those immediately beneath them, however unclassical may be their avocations and abodes, surely present not less available materials to the Novelist, than the virtues and the vices of the higher orders. We have tragedies, such as the *Gamester*, *George Barnwell*, and others, where the pathos of the scene seems to be rendered more thrilling, and to come more immediately home to our business and bosoms, because the characters are taken from among the less elevated classes of society. The Germans and the French have novels exclusively illustrative of the manners of the people ; and they who have read the works of MICHAEL RAYMOND, or even the single most affecting tale of "*Le Maçon*," must admit that the adventures of artisans and shopkeepers are not less susceptible of deep interest than the woes of coronetted grandeur

With these examples and encouragements, the Author has attempted a Tale, of which the scene is principally laid in those plebeian pur-lieus to which he has already referred, the characters being chosen from that proscribed, or at least neglected sphere, the lower grades of middling life. He has not avoided the delineation of individual vulgarity, but he has not made it the characteristic of a class; while he has ventured to introduce instances of refinement and dignified feeling among his unfashionables, because he cannot find in real life any warrant for the doctrine that the less noble are, in the aggregate, more ignoble than others.

The writer is fully aware that he labours under the disadvantage of combating long-established associations, and he feels himself, therefore, justified in making an especial appeal to the indulgence of the reader. If he succeed in interesting and amusing, his experiment will



# JANE LOMAX.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ I wish that it may not prove some ominous foretoken of misfortune to have met with such a miser.”

SIDNEY.

IN one of the narrow back streets of Bristol, an expiring coke fire, winking and clicking in the old-fashioned grate of a shabby room, threw a dim gleam upon the surrounding Dutch tiles, stamped with rude figures of saints and martyrs ; while the faint light emitted from a single unsnuffed candle, placed on a circular oaken table, gave an additional air of penury and

gloom to those portions of the apartment which its feeble ray was enabled to penetrate.

The mantel-shelf, lumbered with a confused assemblage of phials, pill-boxes, and gallipots, would have sufficiently revealed to any casual observer that he was in a sick chamber, which, however, exhibited none of the luxuries, or even comforts, usually provided for the accommodation of an invalid. Instead of a warm carpet, patches of cold well-worn oilcloth were nailed to the floor ; neither sofa nor easy chair was to be seen ; the scanty furniture was of the meanest description ; and, although the tall dusky bed seemed by its wrought canopy, which touched the ceiling, to have once known better days, its tattered fringe and faded hangings betrayed that many a long year had elapsed since it had received any renovating touches from the upholsterer : while its disproportionate height and sombre hue, together with the blended ghastliness of the dim candle and

half-extinguished fire, which left a part of its outline in deep shade, imparted to it an almost spectral character, if we can imagine a piece of furniture to be susceptible of any such effect.

It looked like a death-bed, and such, indeed, it might be termed; for its knotted mattress was pressed at this moment by Diedrich Hoffman, an old German, labouring under a fatal malady, who for upwards of forty years had carried on the business of a sugar-baker in Bristol, where he had amassed a handsome fortune by the profits of his trade, and by penurious habits, of which the rigour might be inferred from the slight description we have given of his abode. Naturally averse to all change, and well knowing that no removal can be effected without expence, he had continued to occupy his present residence from his first arrival in the city, grudging even the trifling expenditure necessary to renew its furniture,

or repair its dilapidations, so that it had gradually fallen into a very forlorn state.

And yet, notwithstanding these flagrant manifestations of a sordid spirit, Diedrich Hoffman could hardly be termed a miser. True, he denied himself almost every gratification that other men covet, but it was because he differed from their tastes, and found more pleasure in foregoing than in enjoying the ordinary delights of the world. An habitual economist, a confirmed old bachelor, and something of a humourist, he would, nevertheless, occasionally perform a liberal or even a munificent action, without deviating in other respects from his customary parsimony. When subscriptions had been set on foot for public objects, his name had stood upon more than one occasion at the head of the list.

That he had not been impelled to these rare conquests over his niggardly disposition by the vanity of being reputed a rich man, we will

and two children, on the sorry pittance which he earned as clerk to a law-stationer. This man, by name Joel Lomax, had in the course of a few months so far recommended himself by his assiduity and integrity, that Hoffman not only made a considerable addition to the salary he had agreed to give him, but proposed that his wife and children, whose manners and appearance he had found singularly prepossessing, should take up their abode in his house. To this offer he was probably incited by the irksomeness of solitude, and that sense of his growing infirmities to which we have already alluded : but, whatever might have been his motives, the proposition was too beneficial to its object not to be eagerly and gratefully accepted.

Incessant were the whisperings and tattlings, and manifold the surmises, to which this unprecedented act of kindness gave rise ; but, when Hoffman ordered additional furniture for

when they adverted to his advanced age and waning health, which intimated no very remote termination to his life. They thought it not impossible that so singular and self-willed a character might even make his new inmate his heir, under which impression several, who had previously refused to notice the poverty-stricken clerk, now courted his society, reminding him that his benefactor had only one known relation in the world, a nephew, whom he had disinherited for having made an imprudent marriage with a strolling actress.

They urged Lomax, therefore, to ingratiate himself by every possible means with the old man, in the hope of succeeding to his property, or, at all events, of obtaining a handsome legacy, should he have left the bulk of his fortune, as was generally anticipated, to his partner and fellow-countryman, Mr. Vandermeulen. Instead of lending himself to the golden and aspiring thoughts which such sug-

gestions were calculated to awaken, the humble clerk, whose every hope seemed to have been crushed by long suffering and disappointment, repressed them as foolish and presumptuous dreams, to which it did not become him to listen, protesting that he had already received more favours from his benefactor than he should ever be enabled to requite. Cautious professions of this nature had been counselled by his wife, a woman whose shrewd, subtle, and powerful mind had obtained a complete ascendancy over the faculties of her weak and spirit-broken husband. With this brief prelude of explanation we return to the sick chamber.

Silence had reigned in it for some time, only interrupted by the occasional breathings of the slumbering invalid, and the regular ticking of a ponderous German watch suspended over the wooden mantel-shelf; when, from that side of the bed which was veiled in deep shade, Joel Lomax, the sick man's clerk, advanced

noiselessly towards the table in the centre of the room.

He was a tall, gaunt, stooping figure, apparently about sixty years of age, attired in a shabby suit of black, his deeply-furrowed cheeks and haggard countenance betraying long-endured cares and sorrows, with which, to judge by the cowed look of his eye, and the peculiar expression of imbecility about his mouth, he was but little qualified to struggle. After having snuffed the candle, he looked at the watch, and, taking two or three lumps of coke from a wooden box, dropped them softly on the fire, an operation, however, which he could not accomplish without making a noise that awoke the dozing patient.

“Fot is de madder?” asked Hoffman, who, from his having associated almost exclusively with his own countrymen in England, had never been able to shake off his German accent. “Is dat you, Lomax? Why don’t you gome

de Brice Gurrent, de sales by auction, or de Gustom House entries and exborts, fot I dake a delight to hear ! Bote your boor boy Benjamin is doo delicate vor a sick room. He vainted away fain I was blooded. Don't let him gome do me no more—I don't like do see people vaint away : it botes me in mind of death."

"That dear boy has always been a delicate plant, and, even now, I sometimes doubt whether we shall rear him, a fear that makes me very unhappy."

"Bah ! Dat is only begause you are afraid to lose your happiness fot he gibbs you now. Ah ! mine goot vriend ! you have, besides, got a wife and a daughter vhat loafes you, and vhat can sid by your side and nurse you fain you get old and lose your brecious helt ; and I am aged and sick, and have got nobody fot loafes me. I begin do dink dat an old paitchelor is a melancholy ding to live, and a still more

hainful ding to die; and fain I ged aboud again—  
vhich I drust will be soon, for I veel bedder,  
moch bedder do-night—I shall lose no time,  
bote look about me vor a zootable wife.”

Grave as was the temperament of Lomax,  
he could hardly refrain from smiling, when he  
coupled this strange declaration with the ad-  
vanced years, as well as the doubtful state,  
of the speaker, whose malady was of a much  
more perilous nature than he himself seemed  
to apprehend. His countenance, however,  
preserved its usual submissive dejected expres-  
sion; he said nothing, and the sick man con-  
tinued.

“I should like, mine goot Lomax, do ged  
oop do-morrow, and drive out a liddle way in  
a hackney goach, vor I dink de air would do  
me more goot dan all de dogtors stuff, and  
wouldn't cost so moch. You and your wife  
and taughter shall go wid me, and we will drive  
upon de Clifton road; bote, fain we gome to

de dumbpike, we will durn about, for I am ruined enough already wid de dogtor's fees. Have you pote down in de betty gash boke how much you pay vor all dis robbery of mine burse ?”

“ I believe, sir, that Mrs. Lomax has entered every thing.”

“ Ah ! she is a goot woman of business, and would have made a gabital boke-keeper. It is a gounfort when a man knows he will nod be blundered and robed by de beople about him.”

Their colloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Vandermeulen, the patient's partner, a calculating, long-sighted, money-grasping man, who took no small interest in the health of his friend, since he verily believed himself to have been named his sole heir, an object which for many years past, and by a great variety of manœuvres, he had been seeking to accomplish.

Insiduously encouraging Hoffman's nephew to make an imprudent marriage, by assurances that his uncle's anger would be transient, and that a reconciliation would speedily be effected, although he knew the old man to be stubborn and almost inexorable, when once offended, he subsequently sought every opportunity to widen the breach between them, and his machinations finally succeeded.

With true German phlegm, Hoffman burnt, on the morning of his nephew's marriage, a will which he had made in his favour, merely exclaiming, as he tossed it into the fire, "Fain I leave mine broberthy, it shall be to a man of goot jodgement, and nod to a jagass."

A few months afterwards, as he was on the point of visiting Cheltenham in the hope of re-establishing his health, he took his partner aside, and putting the draught of a fresh will into his hands, desired him to look it over, and let him know what he thought of it. By this

instrument he proposed leaving his whole fortune to his godson, Diedrich, Vanderneulen's eldest boy. Blinded by cupidity, the father, instead of expressing a becoming gratitude for this intended act of munificence, was indiscreet enough to betray a feeling of disappointment, suggesting that to make young men independent of their parents was a proceeding fraught with danger, and insinuating that it would be a much better arrangement were the money left to himself in the first instance. "I dought I should have bleased you," muttered the old man, "bote berhaps you are right, berhaps you are right." With these words he took back the paper, hobbled to his own room, and immediately committed it to the flames, repeatedly exclaiming, "Fain I leave mine broberthy, it shall nod be to de son of a jagass, and still less to de old jagass himself."

On the following morning he procceded to Cheltenham, during his visit to which place,

either mollified by the sense of his waning health, or touched by some other compunctious visiting of nature, he caused a new will to be prepared, in which he once more bequeathed his entire fortune to his nephew, Edward Rud-dock. This instrument, however, he did not execute, but brought it back with him to Bristol, sharing the common superstitious notion that to sign a last will and testament is like despatching a card of invitation to Death.

Although Mr. Vandermeulen, firmly believing his suggestion to have been adopted, was prepared to meet the demise of his partner, and to succeed to his property with a truly christian resignation ; he was anxious, for the sake of appearances, that nothing should be omitted which might seem calculated to prolong his life. During his illness he had been indefatigable in his attentions ; and the object of his present visit was to apprise the patient that, having felt it his duty to call in additional ad-

vice, a consultation of physicians would be held in the course of the next half hour. Feeble as he was, the choleric old German started up in his bed at this announcement, eructating oaths in his native tongue, and bestowing no very measured abuse upon his partner for subjecting him to such an additional expence, until he happened to recollect how completely the offender had outwitted himself in the affair of the will, when he became suddenly pacified, muttering with an inward chuckle and a ghastly grin : — “ Goot ! goot ! I have gaught him in his own trap. Diedrich Hoffman is not to be gajoled nor bambooshled. Well, well, led 'em gome, led 'em gome. I shall ged well in spite of all de dogtors and aboaticaries. I am bedder, moch bedder.”

An apothecary and physician had already been in attendance : one of the most eminent of the faculty then practising in Bristol, (we are speaking of the close of the last century)

his brother practitioner, "with an account of some despatches from the Mediterranean. It is reported that Nelson, having obtained a certain clue to the French fleet, has returned to the coast of Egypt."

"Ay, but it may be too late, now. I always said that he should never have left it," observed the first speaker, who was a keen politician.

"May I presume, Dr. H——, that you approve of what has been done?" inquired the apothecary, anxious that the leading practitioner should sanction his treatment of the sick man.

"Not at all, sir, not at all ; quite the reverse. He should not have quitted Alexandria ; for the French fleet, he might be well assured, could never remain long separated from the army."

"You mistake me, Doctor ; I was speaking of our patient."

"How could I dream of that, sir ? I pre-

sumed, of course, that you were alluding to Nelson. Any other news stirring?"

"None but what I presume you must have heard, the failure this morning of the house of Phillpotts and Patterson, an unlucky affair for me, for I lately attended Mr. Patterson's family of seven children, in measles and scarlatina, and I apprehend, from what I hear, that I must now be contented with a small dividend on my bill."

"You will be nothing out of pocket," said the physician, with a quiet smile.

"Nay, Doctor, you are not to suppose that our business, like your's, is all profit."

"True, true : I had forgotten the phials and pill-boxes. Sailed back again for the coast of Egypt, has he? He will miss them, mark my words. I am seldom wrong ; he will miss them a second time."

"With regard to our patient," resumed the apothecary.

“I cannot quite agree with you,” said the second practitioner, addressing himself to the first. “Nelson is a lucky man, or, in other words, a skilful and persevering commander. Depend upon it he will yet give a good account of the enemy.”

Snuff-boxes were now produced, the fire was again stirred, and the medical politicians, who had totally forgotten the ostensible object of their meeting, entered into an animated discussion, which lasted several minutes, as to the probabilities of an engagement between the hostile fleets.

Availing himself of a momentary pause, the apothecary ventured to repeat :—“I hope, Dr. H——, that you approve of what I have done. May I ask what you consider to be our patient’s particular and immediate complaint?”

“Old age; a disease that we have little chance of palliating, since one day adds more to it than twenty physicians can take from it.”

"I am proud to find, Doctor, that your opinion coincides with mine. I saw from the first that it was an utterly hopeless case."

"If you were aware that professional advice was of no earthly use, I wonder you did not call me in sooner," said the second Esculapean, in a tone of reproach.

"I should have done so, Doctor, as usual in all such cases, but that my patient, who is as obstinate as a mule, would not consent to it."

"Upon such emergencies you should be imperative. We must not let a rich man slip out of the world without paying the customary tolls. In two or three days, although nature has rallied for the moment, he will no longer be a subject for any fees but those of the clergyman and undertaker."

"As all further consultations, then, are manifestly useless," resumed the apothecary, "we had better make up for lost time, and arrange

to meet twice a day, until we receive a mortuary dismissal."

"You are a man of business," said Dr. H——, with his accustomed tranquil smile. "From a rich, childless, penurious patient, like Diedrich Hoffman, I never decline a fee, in order that I may be enabled to refuse it when tendered by those who can less afford its disbursement."

"The first half of your example," said the second doctor, "is worthy of all imitation; but the latter clause must be executed with great discretion."

"I presume you will think it necessary to prescribe," hesitated the apothecary, pushing forward the pens and paper. "It is of little use, however, for my wrong-headed patient will no longer take any of my medicines."

"In that case," smiled Dr. H——, "he cannot possibly object if we order all the doses to be doubled. What say you, brother?"

“Nothing can be more reasonable; and I will write accordingly.”

A couple of illegible lines having been scribbled in Latin and duly signed, the sons of Galen, apparently not much exhausted by their deep and anxious deliberation, were about to quit the apartment, when the apothecary observed that the patient, so far from being aware of his rapidly-approaching dissolution, flattered himself with the hope that he was recovering, and would shortly be enabled to return to business. “How would you have me act,” he continued, addressing himself to Dr. H——, “as to communicating to him his real situation? What is your own rule upon such occasions?”

“That depends upon circumstances. Where I have reason to believe that the patient has settled all his worldly affairs, a fact which it is generally easy to ascertain from some of the family, I am anxious to leave him all the con-

solutions of hope, not only as it may smooth the path of death, if his complaint be incurable, but because I believe it possible that he may invigorate the vital principle by clinging with a confident tenacity to life. No one who knows what a mysterious, I had almost said a miraculous influence the mind sometimes exercises upon the body, will be surprised at this assertion. For the same reason, and especially in nervous cases, the very fear of death will often accelerate the death we fear; so that I hold it safer, as well as more humane, to soothe the bed of sickness by a delusion, which is certainly gratifying and may be salutary, than to agitate it by a truth which is sure to be painful and may be mischievous."

"I differ from you," said the second practitioner. "Your premises may be good, as far as they go, but you have omitted to advert to higher and more imperative considerations. The claims of religion supersede all others, and

I cannot suffer a fellow-creature to go out of the world without giving him an opportunity of making his peace with Heaven. My conscience will not suffer it."

"It is the same conscience, nevertheless," said Dr. H——, with a touch of irony in his smile, "which allows you to take fees from him twice a day, after you know his case to be hopeless. For my own part, I freely confess that I place no great faith in the efficacy of death-bed repentances. I doubt whether the eye of Omniscience can be so easily hoodwinked; whether the Deity can be propitiated by ~~our offering him the devil's leavings~~; by our professing virtues ~~where we~~ can no longer practise sin; by our disowning his authority so long as disobedience flattered our evil passions and tardily and meanly crying out for quarter, not so much from a change of principle as of circumstances not from the love of religion or of heaven, so much as from the sel-

fish fear of a punishment which we braved until it became imminent. A living penitence, depend upon it, is ten thousand times better than a dying one."

"But, I believe," said the apothecary, "that Mr. Hoffman has never executed his will, although I am pretty confident that he has prepared one."

"In that case, my objections vanish; and, for the sake of the living, he had better be immediately informed that he is dying. He cannot possibly hold out more than ——. Hah! I hear the horns again! I must positively have a peep at the paper. Nelson will miss the French fleet. I have said it, and I repeat it."

Vandermeulen and Lomax were now summoned into the chamber, to receive the report of this long and arduous deliberation, as well as to pay the fees; when the diploma'd Esculapians, after appointing to meet again on the

following morning, took their departure, and the apothecary, for Vandermeulen declined that perilous office, returned to the sick room, to communicate to the patient the probability of his dissolution in the course of a few days.

## CHAPTER II.

"Here I acknowledge thee  
My hope—the only jewel of my life—  
The best of children—dearer than my breath—  
A happiness as high as I could think:  
And when my notions call thee otherwise,  
Perdition light upon me!"

A KING AND NO KING.

HAVING had several opportunities of witnessing the unmanageable disposition of his patient, the bearer of these alarming tidings was not without apprehensions as to the effect they might produce; but Hoffman received them with no other change of countenance than a grin of incredulous scorn, as he exclaimed, "My gumblemends to yourself and de dogtors, and you are all liars and jaggasses! Mine own jodgement is bedder dan your's, and

I feel dat I shall not be bote under de grass dis time, unless dere is a gonspiracy to gill me. I tell you I am bedder, moch bedder, ever since I left off daking your nasty drogs and rubbish."

"I am merely," resumed the apothecary, "giving you our unanimous and conscientious opinion, and, such being our conviction, I feel it my duty to inquire whether you wish to have any spiritual advice."

"I wish for noding what is to gost money."

"We will find a clergyman who shall attend you gratuitously."

"Den I won't see him, for none bote a jagass would give me his advice for noding, dat is, if it were wort having."

"It is my further duty to remind you that you have no time to lose, if you have not yet prepared your will."

"It is brebared, bote nod egsecuted. Hah! dat is a goot thought! a goot thought! If

you gill me among you, I must dake gare dat you do not plunder me too. Where is Joel Lomax? ”

“ I am here, sir,” said the clerk, who had just entered the apartment.

“ Lomax, give me mine drowzers : hah ! dis is de key of de oken gabinet in your ped-room ; onlock it, and you shall find on de dop shelf, behind a bundle of rags, a baper wrapped oop in a biece of old black gloth ; bring it to me widout ondying it.”

His directions were obeyed ; when he unfolded the cloth, and, taking out a paper, said, “ Hah ! dis is de will ; I will read it over do-night, and it shall be egsecuted do-morrow, fair de physicians gome to veel my pulse and bick mine pocket.” At the mention of the word will, his partner, who had been listening at the door, made his appearance, eagerly tendering his services in whatever way they could be rendered available. “ Dank you, dank you

gindly, Vandermeulen," said the patient with a sardonic grin, "you were goot enough to give me a hint about mine will some dime ago, and you will find I have not forgotten it. For de bresent I will not drouble you, nor any von else; bote, if you will all leave mine room, I will dry and get some sleep." So saying, he thrust the will under his pillow and composed himself for slumber, when his visitants withdrew; and Lomax, who had passed the previous night in the sick room, despatched his wife to occupy a chair by the bedside of the invalid.

Ungovernable passions, humble station, and a considerable share of personal beauty, all fearful temptations to an ill-educated female, had occasioned Mrs. Lomax, at a very early age, to plunge into evil courses, over which we shall charitably drop a veil. A vigorous, penetrative mind, and a suppressed, but not extinguished, sense of rectitude, quickly enabling her to discern the errors of the course she was

tion, she sought eagerly for some means of recovering the station she had forfeited, and the subject which could only be effected by a decisive marriage.

Most females similarly circumstanced would have been deterred by the difficulties of such an undertaking ; but, to a mind like her's, impetuosity was incentives, while her sharp discrimination soon found a fitting object on whom she might exercise her wiles. Joel Loman was engaged in a thriving trade, was respectable, amorous, and weak. Her blandishment of his beauty, and that almost irresistible fascination which a strong decided mind can exercise over one that is feeble and irresolute, quickly accomplished all the rest. In three months they were married.

inappreciable value of character from the deeply-felt humiliation of its loss, she conducted herself so irreproachably in her new neighbourhood, where her previous history was unknown, that she won universal respect. Too quick and apprehensive not to perceive the deficiencies in her education, she secretly and assiduously commenced a course of self-instruction, a task which soon enabled a vigorous intellect like her's to take its station rather above than below the level of the sphere in which she was now moving.

From this late, though diligent and successful, cultivation of her talents, she derived no small advantage in after-years, since it qualified her to assist in the education of her children, under a reverse of fortune, which all her exertions and abilities, for she was her husband's chief counsellor and director, even in the affairs of business, had been unable to ward off.

In the struggles that ensued, and during the

late years of penury, when Lomax had supported himself and family on the pitiful salary of a law-stationer's clerk, she had endured every thing without uttering a single complaint as to her own lot, although she would occasionally, and even sharply, reproach her husband for his prostration of spirits and total want of manly fortitude. Her own composure, however, did not proceed from resignation, so much as from that proud resistance to calamity which is ever offered by a high and intrepid spirit. Knowing the enmity of fortune to have been unprovoked by any extravagance or indiscretion, an indignant sense of its injustice enabled her to endure it, not only without repining, but with a feeling of defiance that was much more consonant to her courageous soul than a cowering submission.

By that benevolent provision of nature which generally concentrates the parental, or at least the maternal, affections upon whichever object,

from its physical or mental imperfections, has the most need of incessant watchfulness and love, the strong passions of Mrs. Lomax, which for so many years had been kept in restraint, vented themselves in an unmeasured and ungovernable fondness for her only son Benjamin, an amiable and beautiful, but sickly, youth, whom they had reared with the greatest difficulty, and upon whom the mother doated with a redoubled devotion every time that she snatched him, as it were, from the jaws of death. Upon each of these occasions, she felt as if he had been born again to her ; and thus the affection, which would have sufficed for several children, became concentrated upon one. A blind and excessive attachment of this nature not seldom punishes itself by spoiling its object ; but her son was of so happy a nature, so affectionate, so right-principled, so amiable, that he remained unperverted, even by over-indulgence, and in some degree justified the

verted to the precarious state of this cher  
that her resolute heart ever sank w

.

Had a stranger casually fixed his eyes  
s. Lomax, as she entered the sick room  
uld hardly have imagined her to corres  
he character we have been describing.  
a years younger than her husband, and  
ibiting considerable remains of perso  
uty, her countenance was much more i  
ve of calmness than of those turbulent p  
as to which she had occasionally given v  
sciousness of superior mental power, e  
n combined with susceptibility to viol  
ulse, will often impart an air of compos  
he features ; and he who should have m

eye, and resolute brow, that she possessed a mind capable of almost any enterprise, when its latent energies should be called into action.

No sooner had she taken her station by the bed-side, than the sick man, rousing from his feigned slumber, said in a whisper, "Dat is you, mine goot Mrs. Lomax — I know your voodsteb ; is dere nobody else in de room? "

An answer was given in the negative. " Den lock de door," he continued, " and bring me de gandle. "

She did as she was directed, and Hoffman, fumbling under his pillow and drawing out the will, attempted to read it, but his eye-sight, which had been latterly failing him, was now so defective that he could not succeed, and he handed it over to Mrs. Lomax, saying, with a groan, " De gursed dogtor's stuff has quite spoiled mine eye-sight, so read it to me, read it to me, mine goot voman, but bromise me you will not tell de condends to nobody, bromise

me as you are a goot Christian, and fain you read, do not speak doo loud."

She gave the required pledge, and proceeded to read the will, which was very short, the whole of his property being devised, as we have already stated, to his nephew, Edward Rud-dock.

"Very goot, very goot," he exclaimed when she had concluded; "bot der is a liddle godicil what you will like; read it, read it."

By this addition, which seemed to have been recently made, and was all in his own hand-writing, he bequeathed a legacy of two hundred pounds to his faithful clerk, Joel Lomax, who was also appointed one of his executors. The wife expressed her warmest gratitude for this unexpected remembrance, and the sick man, muttering, "Goot, goot, dis will make you gomfordable in your old age — I will egsecute it do-morrow," again thrust the will under his pillow and composed himself to sleep.

How rapidly, how instantaneously, may our evil angel, or rather our own vicious propensities, even after a long course of unimpeachable conduct, suggest to us a deed of which the execution shall totally alter the whole future course of our life ! So far from being inspired with gratitude for the legacy bequeathed to her husband, the first thought that entered the fermenting brain of Mrs. Lomax was the possibility of obtaining the whole of the dying man's large fortune ! Nobody, it is said, knows the weak side of his intended victims so well as the devil ; nobody so clever and discerning in the disguises he assumes for the purpose of effecting his object. That with which he invested himself when tempting Mrs. Lomax wore the semblance of maternal affection.

“ I care not for myself,” she mentally ejaculated. “ In all our struggles and hardships I have disdained to utter a single complaint ; my husband is now inured to toil and penury,

and his spirit is bowed down to his humble station ; our daughter Mary has youth, health, beauty, and accomplishments, with which she can hardly fail to make her way in life ; but my poor, dear boy is sickly, sensitive, and conscientious, with a mind as delicate as his frame, and both totally unfitted for wresting his subsistence from a hard and un pitying world, which sometimes suffers even the bold, the robust, and the unscrupulous, to perish of want. Benjamin, my darling Benjamin ! thy father's health is already undermined, mine begins to evince symptoms of decay ; we are neither of us young, and what is to become of thee when we are called away, and leave thee to the buffetings of the storm, without rudder or compass, without a friend, and without a guinea ? I cannot bear to think of it. Away, away, thou hideous vision ! I should be the most unnatural of mothers did I not do all in my power to save my boy from such a miserable fate, and surely

Heaven itself will look down with indulgence upon a pious fraud, which emanates from the fond feelings of a mother, and has no other object than to protect her helpless son, when he becomes an orphan, from pauperism and anguish ! ”

When we are seeking to indulge a guilty wish, the mind becomes exceedingly quick-sighted on one side of the question, while it is sometimes totally blind upon the other. Had not her judgment been thus warped, the penetrative Mrs. Lomax could hardly have deluded herself with the notion that she might defraud a real orphan, for such was Edward Ruddock, of his inheritance, for the sake of bestowing it upon a hypothetical orphan, who had no other claims to it than delicate health, and an incapacity for the active employments of life. Still less could she have imagined that Heaven would sanction any such flagrant iniquity. In fact, the boundless and ungovernable affection

for her son, which was now agitating her whole frame with impetuous emotions, had not allowed her to weigh any thing but the possibility of aggrandizing him by forging a new will, a criminal scheme of which she had no sooner entertained the idea than her prompt and inventive faculties suggested the means of its accomplishment, without incurring, as she verily believed, the smallest risk, or even possibility, of detection.

As instant and undaunted in executing as she had been quick in conceiving this unprincipled fraud, she first ascertained that Hoffman was sound asleep, and then, gently introducing her arm under the pillow, drew out the will without disturbing him. Aware that she would require it during the whole night, should she succeed in her meditated object, her mind ran with the rapidity of lightning over the various contingencies that might arise during her absence from the sick room. Of these the most obvious

was the probability that the invalid might awake, and search for the will, which seemed now to be the predominant object of his solicitude. To guard against this occurrence, she folded up a sheet of coarse paper to the exact size of the original, and was cautiously insinuating it beneath the pillow, when Hoffman, who was very easily awakened, suddenly opened his eyes, and demanded, in a peevish tone, "Heik ! fot de teufel is all dis ? fot is de madder ?"

"Your head had slipped off the pillow, and I was endeavouring to replace it," said Mrs. Lomax ; while with perfect self-possession she thrust the supposititious will into the desired position.

"Bah ! don't you drouble and plague me, but leave me to mineself : neverdeless I most have mine head upon de billow. Hah ! I bote de will dere ; where is de will ?" Extending his arm, he felt the paper, and continued drowsily—"Goot, goot ! it is all right. Go to your

baid, go to your baid ! I have god de bell-rope at mine hand, and if I want any ding I will — ”

The remainder of the sentence dropped into an inarticulate murmur, which presently became a snore ; when Mrs. Lomax stole on tiptoe across the room, opened the door without noise, shut it as softly, and hurried to her husband, bearing with her the will, which she had thrust into her pocket.

In moments of peril and strong excitement, the thoughts hurry through the fermenting brain with such velocity, that she was enabled, short as was the distance she had to traverse, to weigh not only the difficulties she was likely to encounter in bending her husband to her fearful purpose, but to consider the most probable means of surmounting them. Should he hesitate to perpetrate the proposed crime, it would be rather, she suspected, from the fear of its detection than from any high-principled

abhorrence of its commission ; so that, if she could once persuade him of his safety, she did not anticipate much trouble in conquering his scruples.

Condemned as he was by circumstances and the frowns of fortune to a life of toil and self-denial, she knew him, nevertheless, to be naturally indolent and voluptuous—propensities on which she placed no small reliance for the success of her machinations ; and, although he did not share her own headstrong and ungovernable passion for their son, she believed him to be sufficiently attached to both his children gladly to seize an opportunity of promoting their interests, especially if, by so doing, he could essentially, and for the remainder of his life, minister to the gratification of his own desires and appetites. On her knowledge of these particulars, as well as on her habitual ascendancy over him, she relied for success in the nefarious and life-involving vio-

lation of the law to which she was now about to urge him.

Entering their apartment with a stealthy step, she locked the door gently, seated herself in a chair, drew up a long breath, and remained for a minute or two silent, as if pondering in what way she should break the guilty purpose with which her heart was swelling.

“Put on your neckcloth again,” she at length said, with a calm voice, for Lomax, wearied with his last night’s vigils, was preparing to undress himself; “put on your neckcloth, and waken all your faculties to listen to me, for we have business in hand, weighty and momentous business, that will demand our whole attention, and occupy us all the night.”

“All the night!” yawned the husband, with a look of displeasure and surprise; “what can it be? Has any thing happened to Hoffman?”

“Where are the children?” asked Mrs. Lomax, not heeding his interrogatories.

“Mary is in the parlour, working, and Benjamin is reading to her.”

“Joel Lomax, listen to me,” repeated the wife, in a subdued and emphatic tone, “and if you have any questions to ask, any remarks to make, for Heaven’s sake raise not your voice above the level of mine: I have matter to unfold which must reach no earthly ear but our’s, and never pass hereafter from our lips — no, not with our dying breath. You will believe, my dear husband, for my whole married life will attest my devotion to you and to our children, that I would not recommend any such momentous measure for your adoption unless I thought it indispensably necessary to our common welfare. Your interest is mine, mine is your’s, our’s is their’s; but in what I am about to propose self has been my last consideration, or rather it has exerted no influence whatever; for I call you to witness that, in all our reverses and trials, sharp as they have been,

I have never uttered a complaint, never flinched from any labour or privation, however humiliating, which was imposed upon us by our unhappily altered circumstances."

"I always said, Jane, that you bore troubles and vexations better than any woman in the world," replied the husband, wondering not a little what was to follow this impressive preamble.

"My dear Joel," resumed his companion, as she drew her chair closer, and took the hand of her husband in her own, "I felt perhaps as keenly as yourself, but I would not increase your sufferings by useless lamentations. You have experienced how wretched and stinging it is to be precipitated from a state of respectability and comfort into a sphere of penury and toil, with whose vulgar and repulsive occupants your soul recoiled from associating. You have known what it is to be an object of pity or contempt, both equally hateful, to those

who were formerly your equals, or even your inferiors. You have tasted the nauseating bitterness of poverty, I might almost say of want. Incessant drudgery, the contumely and insolence of hard-hearted task-masters, the degrading beleaguerment of duns, coarse and scanty fare, an abode of which you were ashamed, apparel that compelled you to shun your former acquaintance for fear of being shunned by them, privations and self-denial, and all the unutterable loathsomeness of penury, immeasurably aggravated by being shared with those whom you loved the most tenderly, have oppressed your body and soul, until your spirit is almost broken, and your head is bowed down with despondency. If these are hard to bear now, now that you can at least earn the sorry pittance on which we subsist, how intolerable will they become when sickness or age shall have incapacitated you for exertion, and you will have no prospect before you but a miserable

death in a poorhouse, embittered by the reflection that you are leaving your family utterly destitute ! ”

“ What is the use,” sighed Lomax, in a querulous tone, “ of harping upon my unhappy lot, unless you can show me how I am to avoid it ? ”

“ Now, Joel,” resumed the wife, “ mark well my words, and tell me, would it not delight you to have this grinding, this withering, this oppressive weight, rolled from off your heart for ever ? And not from your’s alone, but from our darling Benjamin’s, from mine, from Mary’s ? Would it not rejoice your soul to be suddenly lifted up from this slough of despond, and elevated for the remainder of your days into a station of ease, comfort, independence, wealth, such as should empower you to raise your dejected head, and repay tenfold the scorn of those who have scorned you — to command respect and homage from the proudest of those

whom we knew in our better days — to have, henceforward, no other business than amusement and recreation—to occupy a handsome house — to possess carriages, horses, and servants — to banquet every day upon delicious fare and heart-rejoicing wines — to see your family participating in all these blessings—and when you are summoned hence, after a life prolonged and made happy by all the appliances of wealth, to die with the soothing certainty that those whom you have loved will follow out the same enviable career of enjoyment and independence? ”

“ What avails it, Jane, to tantalize me with this glorious vision, unless you can point out the means of its accomplishment? As there can be but one answer to your questions, it must be either superfluous or unfeeling to propose them with such an earnest and tempting minuteness.”

“ You are right ; there is but one answer to

them ; you would hail with ecstasy this blessed change in our fate, if it could be effected with perfect safety, without trouble, without loss of character, without imputation of any sort. Well, then, it *can* be so effected ; with your assistance I can make you, in the course of this very night, happy, independent, rich, all that I have promised, and more.”

“ You, Jane ! you ! How, how ? I do not understand your words. You cannot be in earnest ; and methinks our poverty forms but a sorry subject for a jest.”

“ See you this paper ? It is Hoffman’s will ; I have just drawn it from beneath his pillow. By this instrument, which he purposes to execute to-morrow, he has left his entire fortune to his nephew Ruddock.”

“ I am not surprised at it : some expressions, that dropped from him at Cheltenham, prepared me for this disposition of his property ; but how are your wild reveries to be accom-

plished by the enrichment of Edward Ruddock ? ”

“ More than twenty times, Joel, have I heard you boast that from long practice you can so correctly imitate any law hand-writing as to deceive even the original penman. Now tell me, and before you answer weigh well all the incalculable blessings and advantages of the measure, weigh well its glorious results, as you are a man, a husband, and a father, and tell me why you should not sit up to-night and make an exact *fac-simile* of this will, only substituting for the name of Edward Ruddock that of our darling Benjamin ? ”

“ Good God ! ” ejaculated Lomax, as he started back, with a look of amazement and dismay, “ forge a will ! Why, it is a felony—a capital offence—a hanging—”

“ Hush ! ” interposed the wife, placing her hand upon his mouth ; “ speak not so loud — utter not a word, except in a whisper, I conjure,

**I command, you !” and her features assumed that authoritative expression to which her pliable spouse had been accustomed to defer.**

**“Are you aware,” resumed Lomax, in an agitated whisper, “that what you are proposing to me is a hanging matter, and that you, yourself, as a counsellor and accessory, would be perhaps incurring a similar penalty?”**

**“There is no risk, and consequently no penalty for either of us, unless we are detected, and of that, as I will presently convince you, there is not a possibility.”**

**“Indeed ! how can that be ? Satisfy me upon this point, and I may listen to you with less alarm and repugnance than I now feel.”**

**“Where there is discovery, it proceeds almost invariably from the treachery of some confederate. Now, in this case we have no accomplices. You and I are identical ; we are one. We cannot betray one another without receiving and entailing indelible infamy both**

upon ourselves and our children—a potent security for our mutual silence and good faith.”

“But without any perfidy or indiscretion on our parts we may be detected by others, by circumstances, by a thousand unforeseen accidents.”

“Not by a single one. Hoffman is known to be an eccentric being, an oddity, a humourist, who, having announced that he had disinherited his nephew, is as likely to select a street pauper as any other for his heir. A dozen people at least have already hinted their expectation that *you* might be adopted by him. It is notorious that you are now his favourite, so far as he can love any thing; the will, therefore, will excite little or no surprise; it will be a nine-days’-wonder for the world, but a source of happiness and independence to us and our’s so long as we remain upon earth.”

“But will Hoffman execute it without again examining or reading it over?”

“Yes ; for he particularly wishes its contents to be kept a profound secret from all, especially from Mr. Vandermeulen.”

“You assured me that your scheme could be carried into execution not only without danger, but without loss of character.”

“And so it can. Where there is no detection, I repeat, there can be no loss of character. Who is there to suspect us ? Who can justify his suspicions, even if he entertain them ? We shall gain, not lose in reputation, for the stigma of poverty will be no longer branded upon our brow, and we shall receive that reverence and respect which are never refused to wealth.”

“But how shall we justify our spoliation of Edward Ruddock ? ”

“Tush ! call it not spoliation. How can we deprive a man of that which he never possessed ? Not knowing his loss, he loses nothing. He has gone to South America as a disinherited man. He can have no hope, for he believes

his uncle to be inexorable. He is young, active, clever — qualities which will probably assist him to make a handsome fortune for himself, so that we shall have done him no real wrong, while we shall have conferred an inestimable blessing upon ourselves.”

“But in the very act of executing the will, may not one glance of Hoffman’s eye reveal our forgery, and expose us to instant infamy and punishment?”

“No. In the first place he is half blind, and secondly, he is quite as anxious as we can be to conceal the contents of the paper. See, it is already folded so that the concluding lines alone are visible. The most prying eye and inquisitive spirit will be unable to penetrate within it at the moment of its execution; and we may be well assured that it will be restored immediately afterwards to its hiding-place beneath his pillow.”

Slowly unfolding the paper, Lomax sate with

his eye fixed upon it ; but his bosom was too much agitated by contending emotions to allow him to peruse it with any degree of comprehension. Before his mental eye floated, in gorgeous and seductive array, all the allurements of wealth, so glowingly painted by his wife, the homage that it invariably extorts from the myriad worshippers of Mammon, the fascinations of honourable station in society, the witchery, the enchantment, to a poor dependent drudge, of perpetual freedom from care and toil, the delights of a handsome establishment, of luxury, amusement, and indulgence in all his favourite pursuits and appetites. But, on the other hand, his thronging fears conjured up before him the grisly phantom of detection, infamy, imprisonment, and the final expiation of his crime by a public execution on the gallows ! His mind, which had only partially recoiled from the commission of the meditated offence, shrunk in dismay from the contempla-

tion of its consequences ; his terrors predominated over his hopes and yearnings ; a shudder ran through his whole frame ; and, letting the paper fall upon the table, he exclaimed with a faltering voice and averted eyes, for he was afraid to look his wife in the face, " Jane, let us go no farther in this dreadful business ; take away the will, and replace it—for Heaven's sake, replace it where you found it ! Some devil must have tempted you : the consequences are too frightful — a horrible abyss is yawning at our feet. 'The gallows ! the gallows ! My blood runs cold at the very thought. I tremble all over.' "

" Shadows have often made you tremble, while I have stood undaunted in the midst of real dangers. Are you not ashamed of yourself ? "

A look of involuntary contempt passed over the features of the speaker, and she was on the point of sharply upbraiding her husband

with his misgivings and irresolution, when approaching footsteps were heard ; some one tried the handle of the locked door ; and immediately afterwards three gentle taps were given on the panel. Had Lomax been detected in the very perpetration of the suggested crime, his countenance could scarcely have assumed an aspect of greater horror.

“ Chicken-hearted creature ! are you afraid of your own thoughts ? ” whispered the wife, in an accent of scornful reproach. “ Shut those staring, fear-fraught eyes, and pretend to be asleep ; you are fit for nothing else. ” So saying, she folded up the will, which she again committed to her pocket, and with a calm look and unembarrassed manner unlocked and opened the door.

## CHAPTER III.

"Croakings of ravens, or the screech of owls,  
Are not so boding mischief as thy crossing  
My private meditations. Shun me, prythee,  
And if I cannot love thee heartily,  
I'll love thee as well as I can."

THE BROKEN HEART.

THE party by whom they had been thus startled in the midst of their guilty consultation proved to be their son, a youth about fifteen years of age, whose singular beauty, irradiated by an incipient consumption, of which his parents did not yet suspect the existence, almost justified the fond averment of the mother, when, in answer to her husband's occasional observation that Benjamin was more like a girl than a boy, she would rejoin—"And more like an angel than either."

I saw him immediately become more des-  
 cended the more he began to grow into a  
 full man. His complexion by its roseate tint,  
 the richness of his luxuriant hair, which was so  
 transparent that every minute modification of  
 the blood was visible beneath it. His  
 blue eyes, mild in their expression as those of  
 the dove, but deeply tinged the pearly hue and  
 liquid lustre symptomatic of the insidious com-  
 plaint lurking in his system. Although they did  
 not yet share with any of that preternatural and  
 fearful brilliancy which generally characterizes  
 its later stages. In compliance with his mother's  
 wish, he wore his auburn hair parted on the fore-  
 head, and falling down in wavy lines on either  
 side—a peculiarity which, in conjunction with  
 his delicate beauty and winning countenance,  
 completed the seraphic character of his head.

Nor were the qualities of Benjamin's mind,  
 so far as they had been hitherto developed,  
 less prepossessing than his exterior. Frank,

“I have not forgotten your kind injunction that I should go to bed at an early hour,” said the son, as he turned his love-beaming looks upon his parents : “but I should have had little chance of sleeping, unless I had previously wished you good night, and received your usual blessing.”

“God bless you, my dear boy ! ” murmured the father, whose voice still trembled from the agitation into which he had been thrown.

“God bless you, my beloved Benjamin ! ” ejaculated the mother, as she threw her arms around his neck, and impressed a kiss upon either cheek.

“I believe that your blessings and prayers have already done me good,” said the youth, “for I feel much better within these few days, and I hope I shall now soon be quite well. Very, very grateful am I to Heaven for this little improvement, and I pray that I may never forget the mercies vouchsafed to me ! ’Tis on your

or in quite such necessitous circumstances as formerly."

"Thanks to worthy Mr. Hoffman for all his goodness to us. How is he to-night, dear mother?"

"He fancies himself better, but he is in reality worse—much worse."

"Poor man! I am sorry for his sad condition; it quite makes my heart throb to think of him. I always pray for him before I go to sleep, and this night I will be more urgent than ever in my prayers."

"Leave him to the care of Heaven, and get to sleep as soon as you can," said Mrs. Lomax, as if she feared that there might be some efficacy in her son's intercessions. "Good night, my dear boy! your father and I have important business to transact, and besides it is time you were a-bed." So saying, she again embraced him, accompanied him to the door, locked it when he had passed out of hearing, returned to

own better and cooler judgment will confess that it is an abominable scheme—an act of the blackest ingratitude; for surely, surely, it would rather become us to be imitating our dear boy, by praying for the recovery of our benefactor, than to be wronging him thus cruelly, and placing a halter around our own necks.”

“Wrong him! how can we wrong the dead?” demanded the wife in a tone of angry impatience; “how place a halter around our necks, when I have proved to you that there is no possibility of detection? Is it your own cant and cowardice, or this paltry pittance of two hundred pounds, that has suggested such futile objections? To what does it amount, this insulting legacy, so inadequate to our services? It supplies one year’s subsistence, and then consigns us to all the horrors of drudging, abject, and squalid poverty.”

“But with an unblemished name.”

“No—with the stigma of penury, the most

She had intended to pronounce this word with a marked energy ; but in the vehemence of her feelings her voice broke into a sob, which rendered it almost inaudible, and the tears started involuntarily into her eyes. A moment's pause restoring her self-possession, she continued in a firm and impressive tone :

“ Without my darling Benjamin, I would not, could not, live ; I should soon follow him to the grave, and in that event I swear to you most solemnly, and I call upon Heaven to witness and to register my vow, that my ghost shall haunt and torment you, so long as you remain upon earth ! Whithersoever you may wander, at home or abroad, by night and by day, in sickness or in health, in solitude or in society, I will dog your footsteps, and whisper in your ear, even as I do now—Parricide ! give me back the son whom you have murdered ! ”

The sepulchral earnestness of her voice, the passion that convulsed her countenance, the

“I have foreseen all and provided for all. I will take care that there shall be a good fire in the room, and if any attempt be made by Hoffman to read the paper, which I do not in the least anticipate, I will instantly snatch it from his hand and thrust it between the bars. We may then be suspected, but it will be impossible to prove any thing against us; we may be turned out of the house, but so we should, at all events, as soon as he is dead.”

“You forget, however, that we should lose the legacy.”

“Is it not well worth risking so paltry a sum for the chance, I might rather say for the certainty, of an independence for life—for the inestimable assurance of preserving our dear boy, who is far more precious to us than life itself? See!” continued the wife, as she drew a large sheet of paper from her husband’s writing-desk, and held it up to the candle—  
“this is not only of the same quality, but

from the writing, and you will merely have to substitute for the name of Edward Ruddock that of Benjamin Lomax."

"No!" exclaimed the husband, drawing back with an air of more resolute determination than he had yet evinced; "if I am to put my neck into a halter, it shall be for myself, and not for another. I will not risk my life for any body but Joel Lomax. Why not insert my own name instead of Benjamin's?"

"I know not," replied his wife; "I was thinking of nothing but our dear Benjamin, and so his name alone occurred to me; but as my sole end, which is our precious boy's advantage, will be not less fully attained if the fortune be secured to yourself in the first instance than if—"

"Besides," interposed Lomax, "you have heard nobody intimate that our son was likely to be Hoffman's heir, while it is already deemed highly probable by many that all his property

Vandermeulen," should be copied verbatim, only substituting the name of Joel Lomax for that of the nephew, and adding, "as a reward for his faithful services, but more especially for his kind and unremitting attentions to me during my long illness at Cheltenham." The codicil was, of course, to be omitted altogether. Lomax, whose apprehensions had been silenced for the moment, and whose heart was swelling with the anticipation of the aggrandizement that awaited him, set himself busily to his task, while his wife, cautioning him to lock the door after her, quitted the room in order to send her daughter to bed, and to revisit the sick chamber, where she was detained two or three hours by Hoffman, who, in his inability to sleep, insisted upon her reading over to him all her recent entries of minute expenditure in what he termed "de betty gash boke." To many of these articles he objected with as much peevish cavilling as if he had twenty years to live and

ness at each repetition, seemed to announce that the approaching tempest was about to break over the city.

“This is very awful,” said Lomax, depositing his pen, and speaking in an agitated whisper. “This is a bad omen: one would think that Heaven, to whose eye alone our guilty occupation is revealed, warned us by this terrible summons to desist.”

“Ridiculous ! how can you give way to such idle superstition ? Heaven is much more likely to approve than to interrupt our pious purpose. Why did it implant parental feelings in our bosoms, but that we might obey their dictates ? ”

“There is another crash,” faltered Lomax ; “it seemed directly over our heads ; and how vivid was the lightning ! Dearest Jane ! let us wait a little ; there is no hurry, and I cannot write ; I can scarcely hold the pen, while I am

manded the wife, arresting the progress of the paper, which was sliding off the desk. "Simpleton ! it is only Hoffman's bell ; the thunder has disturbed him ; but he cannot long resist the potent opiate I have given him. Keep quiet, and do nothing till I return ; I cannot trust you to act by yourself."

With these words, she hurried out of the room, and its solitary occupant remained in a bewilderment of various emotions, in which, however, fear was predominant, until, after the lapse of half an hour, his wife re-appeared, announcing that the invalid had again sunk to slumber, and urging her husband to the immediate completion of his task. To prevent all hesitation or mistake, she stood by his side, dictating the words as he wrote, in which manner the forged document was finished without further interruption ; when Lomax, having carefully folded it, so that nothing but the concluding line and the date might be visible at

fidence of her air assumed not the language, it produced the effect of a command upon the ductile and irresolute mind of her auditor, who took off his shoes in silent obedience, and stole tremblingly after her, until they reached the bottom of the stairs, where his companion observed that, as there were only iron bars, and no shutters to the window, it would be safer to leave the candle behind them when they entered the kitchen. They did so accordingly, and, drawing the door after them, were crossing the floor, when a gleam of lightning, emitted by the receding clouds, irradiated for a moment the whole apartment. Clinging in agitation to his wife, Lomax stammered in her ear as he drew her back :

“ Stop—stop ! I saw a ma—a ma—a man at the window !— a tall, thin man with a low-crowned hat.”

“ A man ! impossible ! who would let himself down into the area on such a night as this ?

for shame ! Have you not one particle of manhood in your craven heart ? ”

“The bravest may tremble at guilt, and I am only astonished that you can be so perfectly calm and collected. Dear Jane, it is not yet too late to recede, but if the will be once destroyed— ”

“Look you, Joel, I am not a person to be trifled with, nor to be frightened by bugbears from a resolution that I have once deliberately formed. We have gone too far in this matter to stop short, nor am I so weak and pusillanimous, woman as I am, as to lose the glorious prize when it is within my reach. I will do my duty to my dear boy, ay, and so shall you. You must not, nay, you *shall* not, flinch from your purpose. What ? still peering with a timid eye at the window ? Well, I will remove all your doubts and fears. Behold ! I place this screen upon the dresser, and now, if there were a dozen men in the area, not one of them

myself am concerned. My blessed Benjamin is saved from toil, from hardship, from poverty, and all its hideous accompaniments, perhaps from death itself, and this pious end sanctifies the means we have employed for its attainment."

"But in the eye of the law," sighed Lomax, "which pronounces our offence to be felony without benefit of—Hist! hark!—what noise was that? Did you not hear a rattling? Some one is trying the scullery door. We are lost—we are discovered! Good Heaven protect us! My heart throb—throbs so, I can scarcely speak."

"Better be silent than give way to such disgraceful terrors. Why do you suffer yourself to be made the fool of your senses?"

"In a good cause I can be as bold as another; but, in committing this unholy fraud upon our dying benefactor, I feel quite unmanned. I am not deceived, Jane; I certainly saw a

by the opiate, she contrived, without disturbing him, to insert the new will beneath his pillow, and to withdraw the folded paper which she had previously placed there.

cult, notwithstanding the natural violence of her passions, to drive or to entice out of the paths of rectitude. The conviction that she was acting without a single feeling or wish for self-aggrandizement, not only made her appear disinterested in her own eyes, but gave to her conduct the seeming sanction of maternal duty, which she held to be paramount over all other obligations.

But, although she could thus hoodwink her clear perceptions on the score of morality, she could not conceal from herself, whatever confidence she might assume when conversing with her husband, the fearful risks she was incurring. Aware that a hundred unforeseen accidents, against which it was impossible to guard, might involve herself and her accomplice, at the critical moment when the will was produced for signature, in a capital charge, she endeavoured to calculate the more obvious and probable contingencies, to prepare for them as far as

shrinking. Strange ! that you who have consented to this deed—you, who have thus far assisted in it—you, whose whole future life is to be made glorious by its success — should prove a recreant, and desert me when it is to receive its final accomplishment. Be it so. Leave every thing to me. I am better without than with you ; but mark me, Joel ! if you will not assist, you shall not thwart me. Neither I nor my scheme shall be put in jeopardy by your miserable want of self-possession. Quit not your room. This is my positive injunction — nay, my command. To account for your absence I will pretend that you are indisposed ; I will remain with Hoffman until he has executed the will, or refused to sign it ; and, when I next return to you, it shall be with tidings that our prospects are either made or marred for ever ! ”

So saying, she hastened back to Hoffman’s apartment, who awoke as she entered, and de-

could persuade him that Vandermeulen was using underhand means to penetrate the secret of its contents. Throwing out hints, therefore, of his impertinent curiosity, she insinuated that he had been sounding her upon the subject, but that, in conformity to her solemn pledge, she had made no disclosure whatever, and had professed a total inability to satisfy his doubts.

“Goot! goot!” cried Hoffman, “dat is right, mine worthy Mrs. Lomax. Hah! he is gurious, is he? O de kuave, de busy, prying, knave. He shall know ebery ding by and by. Where is de will? Hah, dere it is, I veel it onder mine billow, and dat reminds me what dere are dwo or dree directions I want to give in case I should never ged oop again.”

“I shall be happy to receive any instructions,” said Mrs. Lomax, drawing nearer to the bed.

“Virst and voremost, you must tell your

I wish to do justice to mine poor nephew  
is all ; and now you need not disturb  
will dry and compose myself a liddle.'

As the appointed hour approached  
Lomax, whose collected countenance,  
the least intimation of the feelings so  
busy within her, omitted no preliminary  
arrangement that might facilitate the success  
her purpose. Unknown to the invalid  
would otherwise have objected to her  
fulness, she made up a blazing fire, so  
would presently consume the evidence of  
crime, should she be reduced to the desperate  
extremity of snatching and committing  
the flames. Pens and ink were placed  
small table close to the bed-side, while she  
self

“Shall I fill in the date, sir?” demanded Vandermeulen, who had slipped into the room unperceived by any one.

“No, dank you—no, dank you. Mrs. Lomax is close to de dable, and she will fill in de prober date. You will vind, mine goot Vandermeulen, dat I remember your hint about your son.”

A sardonic expression writhed his cadaverous features, for even on his death-bed he seemed to feel pleasure in avenging himself upon his partner, for having attempted, as he thought, to bamboozle him out of his property.

In inserting the date, Mrs. Lomax took care so to arrange the paper, as that only the concluding lines should be visible ; when Hoffman, who had suspiciously fixed his dull, sunken eye upon her during the process, immediately took it from her hand, and called for a pen. Before he used it, however, he uttered a deep-drawn sigh, or rather groan, and exclaimed in a sorrowful voice :

a witness to the will, (insinuating thereby that he was to take some benefit under it,) but that he might see him sign it.

“Will it not be more convenient for signature,” asked Vandermeulen, “if the paper be unfolded?”

“Hah! goot, goot! dat is soon done,” said the dying man, making a show as if he were about to comply with the request. Mrs. Lomax, whose throbbing heart was in her mouth, cast a rapid glance at the fire, and drew nearer to the bed, that she might snatch away the document in the event of a discovery; but Hoffman, who had guessed his partner’s motives, and found a malicious pleasure in tantalizing him, again placed his hand upon the closed paper as he added:

“No, dere is blenty of room for de witnesses, so do you hold it steady for dem to sign.”

Vandermeulen had now no alternative but to do as he was bidden; the physicians and the

tongue, answer the question which you are afraid to put. Are they not radiant with pride, joy, glory, triumph? Hark you, Joel," she continued, bringing her mouth close to his ear, and speaking in an eager whisper, "success has crowned our enterprize; all our wishes are accomplished; signed, and sealed, and witnessed, without exciting a moment's suspicion: the will, the executed will, is securely deposited beneath Hoffman's pillow; the great object of my soul is attained; and my darling Benjamin is made a gentleman for life; and that life, that precious life, will be prolonged by the thousand luxuries and resources that wealth alone can command!"

"Ha! say you so? say you so? Is it all over? are we safe—quite safe? Oh, what a crushing, what an insupportable load have you removed from my heart! So, then, I am a rich man; released for the remainder of my days from care, poverty, and toil; nothing to do but

declare, cannot be delayed beyond two or three days, when all will be our's, our's for our dear Benjamin ; and our's, too, as I verily believe, without challenge or suspicion. Had we prompted his very words, Hoffman could not more effectually have promoted our views, for he distinctly stated, in the hearing of all, that he was fully sensible of our kindness, and had not forgotten us in his will—a declaration which must for ever remove all doubts of its authenticity. And yet at one moment I was on the very point of snatching it from his grasp, and thrusting it into the fire.”

She related the cause ; when Lomax, clutching her hand, and gazing at her with a look of admiring wonder, exclaimed :

“ You do not tremble, dear Jane, you are not agitated : is it possible that you can be thus calm and collected, when within these few minutes you were standing on the brink of so tremendous a precipice ? How I envy you your

“If I were attending upon him at the moment, I should be too much scared to know what to say or to do.”

“Of that I am well aware, and you had better, therefore, absent yourself from his apartment as much as possible. As I have said that you are indisposed, you can easily — Hark ! there is his bell ; I must return to him.”

During the course of that afternoon, Hoffman became considerably worse ; his pains, which had quitted him for several previous days, were renewed with violence ; he seemed to be rapidly sinking ; and Lomax, whose spirit was cruel because it was cowardly, could not conceal his exultation when apprised that his decease might be almost hourly expected. To the surprise, however, of all, a composing-draught, which gave him a few hours' sleep, wrought so marvellous a change on the morrow, that, believing he had now passed the crisis of his

be allowed to prolong his life, if it endangered that of herself, her husband, and her son.

She who had come without much difficulty to the conclusion we have just been stating, would a few days before have recoiled with horror from the very thought of shortening the days of her benefactor; but one crime often necessitates twenty to prevent its detection; and her mind, fertile in self-deceiving sophistry, now suggested a variety of pleas to palliate, if not to justify, its dark conceptions. It would be a mercy, she argued, to Hoffman himself, to prevent his existence from being protracted for a few months longer, only that he might endure additional sickness and suffering. Who would miss him, whose life could be so well spared? Where would be the harm of infusing a little additional laudanum into his opiate, and thus consigning him pleasantly and unconsciously to the sleep of death? Besides, self-preservation

resuscitation of his powers, she was afraid to trust her husband in the apartment, and resolved to pass this night, as she had done the last, by the bed-side of the patient—a determination to which she was the more impelled by a suspicion that Vandermeulen might make some attempt upon the will. Nature, however, would not second her desires. Worn out by sleeplessness and anxiety, she became so exhausted as night approached, that she was obliged to retire to bed, and to despatch her husband to the sick room, charging him to give her immediate intelligence of any thing that might occur, and above all things not to allow Vandermeulen to have access to the will.

Not long after Lomax had taken his station by the bed-side, the dying man recovered his powers of speech, but the incoherent nature of his discourse showed that his wits were wandering. He talked of Muscovade sugars, of falling and rising markets, of lumps, and loaves,

Lomax complied with his request, and, as he seemed to be falling asleep, he left his hand in his possession for fear of disturbing him, until he himself, wearied with vigils and worn with over-excitement, sunk into a profound slumber by his side.

Several hours had elapsed, when Mrs. Lomax, awaking before dawn of day, and surprised that she had received no communication from her husband, arose, took a candle, and descended to the sick room, where she found the parties in the attitude we have been describing. The first gleam, however, of the light she bore, assured her that a momentous change had occurred since she left the apartment. Hoffman's open, lustreless, fixed eye, the fallen nether jaw, and that peculiar cadaverous look which, when once seen can never be mistaken, convinced her that the object upon which she was gazing was a corpse! She felt his cheek—it was cold as marble; she laid her hand upon

labouring bosom when it is oppressed by the nightmare, stood transfixed with horror, his eyes distended, his mouth open, his hair on end, and the perspiration starting from his brow.

“Nerveless creature!” ejaculated his wife; “coward as you are, you would not have feared him living; why, then, should you tremble now, when he is no longer a man but a lump of clay? Your arms seem to be utterly paralyzed—let mine release you.”

So saying, she deposited the candle on the bed, and, with a vigorous, unshrinking hand, proceeded to unlock the fingers from their hold, a task which required some little exertion of strength.

At this moment the hideous ghastliness of the attenuated corpse, the stern expression of the still handsome female, whose compressed lips, drawn down at the corners, indicated a contempt to which she disdained to

you. Away, away! daylight is breaking; — when you encounter Mary, inform her that the shutters must all be kept closed. Did not Mr. Vandermeulen desire to be instantly apprised of Hoffman's death? ”

“ He gave me repeated injunctions to that effect.”

“ We must comply with them ; every thing must be done in order. I will proceed forthwith to his house. Will you remain with the corpse until I return? ”

“ No, no, no ! ” ejaculated Lomax with an alarmed look. “ He cannot want me now ; see, what a mark his fingers have left on my wrist— my whole hand is chilled. You will find me in our room.”

“ Be it so ; and let me find you, if possible, with a look better adapted to your altered condition.”

With these words the speaker left the apartment, put on her hat and cloak, and

## CHAPTER V.

“ 'Twas his own voice—she could not err ;  
Throughout the breathing world's extent,  
'There was but one such voice for her,  
So kind, so soft, so eloquent.”

LALLA ROOKH.

ALTHOUGH Vandermeulen was tolerably confident that the deceased had acceded to his request, and made him his heir, he had for some time past harboured a growing jealousy of Lomax, and had viewed with an evil eye the marked and unprecedented favour extended to his family. Hoffman's dying declaration that he was grateful for their kindness, and had not forgotten them in his will, had been heard with no pleasant feelings ; for, although he did not

testamentary dispositions will fully bear me out. He chose, however, to affect latterly some degree of secrecy upon this subject ; we know not whom he has named as his executors, nor can we tell, consequently, who will be empowered to give directions about his funeral. To settle these points, the will must be immediately opened and perused ; but, as we cannot give too much publicity to our proceedings, where there are no relatives to call in as witnesses, I propose that it shall be read in the presence of the medical advisers, who have arranged to call here at twelve o'clock. I have not forgotten, Mr. Lomax, that you have some little interest in this affair ; indeed our departed friend intimated as much, but I presume you will not object to my proposition."

"Not in the least, sir, not in the least : whatever you may think proper."

"Do you know where the will is ? It is right that I should make this inquiry."

excite suspicions ; indeed I doubt whether they would proceed to read the will without you. So trifling an ordeal as this you can surely go through, especially as you have some hours to collect your thoughts for the purpose. En-  
sconce yourself in the darkest corner of the parlour, keep your handkerchief to your face as if overcome by your feelings, say as little as you can, and there can be no doubt that all will pass off well."

"If I must, I must," replied the husband ;  
"but I feel so harassed both in body and mind, that I would willingly have spared myself this additional trial."

"And I, though scarcely less fatigued than yourself, would as gladly undertake it, were it customary for females, not having any claim of relationship, to participate in such proceedings."

A few minutes before the appointed hour, Mr. Vandermeulen arrived with the key in his

produce the most important results upon the destinies of Europe."

"I do not attach much credit to it," said the second physician; "the report comes in a very questionable shape, and has, in all probability, been got up for stock-jobbing purposes."

"But, I am told that a French paper is in town, and it can hardly be supposed that ——."

"Had we not better defer this discussion until after the reading of the will?" interposed Vandermeulen. "We are met here for a specific object, to which our attention should surely be directed in the first instance."

"Undoubtedly," said Dr. H——, adjusting his spectacles; "but, if I had that French newspaper in my hand, I cannot promise that I should not run my eye over the leading article before I read a single line of the will. However, to business, to business; are you all ready, and attentive? Hem!" Assent was

“ Really, Dr. H——,” said Vandermeulen, with a look of displeasure, “ this levity, upon so solemn an occasion, is not only indecorous in itself, but highly disrespectful towards my very worthy and much-lamented friend. I must request that you will proceed with the business upon which we are met. I cannot listen to any thing that sounds like a want of proper feeling for the deceased.”

“ Well, if I cannot win your money, you will not, I am sure, refuse to lend me your ears. Attention ! Hem ! ”

With a clear loud voice he now read the testator's opening declaration that he rescinded and annulled his former will, because it had not given satisfaction to his partner.

“ Kind-hearted creature ! ” interposed Vandermeulen. “ It *did* give me satisfaction, singular satisfaction ; I only ventured to suggest one trifling emendation, and I can never be sufficiently grateful that he should so readily

medical conclave looked at one another with smiles of wonderment; Lomax leaned back in his chair, and hid his face in his handkerchief, as if struggling with his feelings; while Vandermeulen, whose eager, hungry visage, even to his lips, became pale with disappointment and rage, exclaimed in a voice of forced composure, though he could hardly command breath enough for the question:—“Will you allow me, Doctor, just to—look over this—*very* extraordinary—paper?”

On its being handed to him, he hurried to the window, devoured its contents with anger-glaring eyes, turned over the leaf to ascertain that there was no codicil or addition, and then reperused it from beginning to end. Its authenticity he did not for a moment doubt: nothing, indeed, occurred to him upon which a suspicion could be hung. On the contrary, his busy thoughts recalled two or three circumstances that tended to confirm it, and he inwardly

his churlish unforgivingspirit: that, in the want of a more eligible heir, he should select his clerk, was equally conformable to his capricious and eccentric nature. The reflection that he had completely outwitted himself, and that in grasping at too much he had missed all, gave such an additional exacerbation to his feelings, that he could not refrain from exclaiming aloud: — “Scandalous treatment! Infamous! this disposition of his property is utterly disgraceful. His conduct towards me has been neither that of a gentleman nor an honest man, still less that of a friend. Who but an insidious hollow-hearted curmudgeon would have played me such a scurvy trick?”

“My good sir,” said Dr. H——, laying his hand demurely upon his bosom, “allow me, for the first and last time, to quote from yourself, and to remind you that such language is not only indecorous in itself, but highly disrespectful towards our very worthy and much-

rage, or rather chased away his misgivings, drew up a long breath, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and, feeling collected enough for a little bit of acting, ventured to ask permission to peruse the will. Fixing his regards upon his own hand-writing, he ran over the lines with a well simulated air of amazement, ejaculating as he concluded : — “ Wonderful ! wonderful ! This is unexpected, indeed ! ”

“ Mr. Lomax,” said Dr. H——, “ I am no hypocrite, and I will not, therefore, express any joy at your being thus strangely enriched, for I cannot but feel that this property, though you are no ways answerable for its present appropriation, ought to have gone to my worthy young friend, Ned Ruddock. I hope Hoffman may be forgiven for the unrelenting spirit in which he died, and I sincerely trust that his fortune may reflect a greater share of happiness and respectability upon its present possessor, than it did upon him who scraped it together.

as we can only be betrayed by ourselves, we had better henceforth place a seal upon our lips, and recur as little as possible to this perilous subject. If we are obliged to mention it, let it be in a whisper that cannot possibly reach any ear but our own."

"But, surely you wish to know all that passed at the reading; you *must* allow me to tell you with what a demure face of wonder I read my own hand-writing, and how admirably I feigned astonishment when my own name was pronounced."

"Subdue your voice, then, so that even the walls of this narrow room shall be unable to hear it."

In whispered tones and a literal *tête-à-tête*, Lomax detailed all that had passed, when his wife, reminding him that she had never entertained any doubts or fears of their final success, inquired whether he had now discarded all his own apprehensions. "I should not have a

we call him in, and communicate to him the happy tidings?"

Without awaiting her husband's consent, to which, indeed, she seldom attached much importance, she opened the door, summoned her son into the apartment, and, after having tenderly embraced him, apprised him of the great and unexpected change in their fortune; making, however, no allusion to Hoffman's nephew, of whose existence he knew nothing. Sudden surprise, and an involuntary sympathy with his mother's undisguised delight, flushed the features and brightened the eyes of the beautiful youth; but, in the sensibility of his affectionate heart and his indifference to worldly wealth, he seemed, after a moment, rather to regret the loss of their generous benefactor, than to rejoice at the opulence which had flowed in upon his parents. His features resumed their usual sedate expression, and there was a touching tone of plaintiveness in his

the reflection that you have obtained this great acquisition without struggle or compromise of any sort. How few, whatever may be their talents and industry, achieve riches without some sacrifice of character, or some secret deviation from the paths of honour and justice. But you have nothing with which to upbraid yourselves; you have violated no law, human or divine; you have deceived none, injured none, defrauded none, and Heaven can hardly fail to bless a fortune thus irreproachably acquired."

Lomax and his wife cast a glance at each other; both reddened with a blush of guilty consciousness; both hastily bent their eyes upon the ground; both felt, for the first time, though not in the deadly bitterness they were subsequently doomed to experience, the most painful of all humiliations, that which is endured by parents when they stand abashed and self-condemned in the presence of their children.

that to invoke a blessing upon herself and her guilty accomplice would only add an unpardonable hypocrisy and profanation to their previous offences, overwhelmed her with such confusion, that she buried her face in her hands, and remained for a brief space fixed in that attitude, without attempting to open the book. As she had wronged a fellow-creature without much compunction, so was she prepared to dare the consequences of her misdeed without a moment's shrinking, so far as it involved worldly punishment or exposure; but her Creator she could not deceive, nor was she yet hardened enough to defy his wrath.

“ You are agitated, dear mother,” said the son, with a more than usual tenderness in his melodious voice. “ You are overcome by thinking of our departed benefactor. Let me supply your place, and I will afterwards read a ‘Thanksgiving for any unexpected worldly blessing,’ which I have selected as being more

tion and a more exalted expression of piety to his features. Eloquent and impassioned in its language, the composition he had chosen began by recognizing the signal and unexpected favour lately vouchsafed to them, as immediately proceeding from the hand of Heaven—a declaration which neither of the guilty parents could hear without an inward shudder.

Again, as in the morning, they exchanged glances, and once more their abashed eyes were hastily withdrawn, and fixed upon the ground. The juvenile reader, proceeding to express an ardent gratitude for the blessing thus unexpectedly bestowed, and an humble trust that it would neither be forgotten nor misapplied, concluded by fervently imploring that continued favour and protection of Heaven, which were even more necessary in sudden prosperity, and amid the temptations of wealth, than in the hour of adversity and need. The emphatic “Amen!” which he ejaculated in closing the

whispering :—“ Are they so ? well, then, I will enact Lady Macbeth, and so—‘ To bed, to bed, to bed, to bed, to bed ! ’ ”

reaction, similar to the languor that succeeds convulsion. It was the spirit of resistance that had enabled her to endure reverses, and even poverty, with such an uncomplaining resolution. While buffeting with misfortune, she scorned either to yield or to repine. Only in the absence of an antagonist did she ever give way. None but herself could be her conqueror.

Both for herself and her accomplice it was perhaps fortunate that they were kept, for some time after the death of Hoffman, in such a perpetual whirl of occupation, such an unintermitted mental excitement, that they had scarce a moment to reflect upon the nature and probable consequences of the deed they had perpetrated. Rumour, with her hundred tongues, had no sooner bruited abroad the contents of the will, than Lomax and his family became the prevalent subject of conversation with all the gossips of the city.

That numerous class of wiseacres who

although somewhat too retiring and diffident, was a most charming girl; and as to the son, such an ethereal being, such a perfectly angelic youth, had never been seen ! Letters of congratulation flowed in from all quarters : the many who had dropped his acquaintance being now anxious to renew it, and the few who had so far remembered him as to return his humble salutation in the streets with a cold half bow, being solicitous to be enrolled among the number of his familiar friends. Duns, who but the week before had pestered him with insolent importunities, now stood hat in hand contending for the honour of executing his orders. If the newly enriched man could have been himself insensible to the great change in his circumstances—for as yet it was not indicated by any alteration in his own appearance or establishment—it would have been forced upon his conviction by the totally altered demeanour of the world.

of the deceased, except as his executor, and who is one of the subscribing witnesses to the will. Prevail on him to accept the office, by all means. The house in which he lives, having belonged to Hoffman, is now our's. To us it is of little worth, although valuable to him from its situation. Suppose you request him to accept it, as a grateful memorial of his professional skill, and assiduous attention to our departed benefactor. He cannot then refuse to act, and you will have secured a staunch friend in your brother executor, which a thousand unforeseen circumstances may render very important."

"Before we talk of giving away, we ought to ascertain what we have got," said the husband, who already seemed to have inherited some portion of his late employer's grasping spirit.

"Not so, Joel; we should first consider whether this trifling gift may not be the means of securing to us all the rest."

we are acting in obedience to Hoffman's dying orders ; we shall be accused of a mean, scandalous, ungrateful penuriousness, and the whole town, for people are always liberal when it can be done at the expense of others, will cry out Shame ! shame ! At present, they only envy us for our unexpected good fortune, but if we betray the smallest disposition to use it in a niggardly spirit, they will hate us—an invidious feeling which they who are strong in right and law may despise, if they think fit, but one which in our situation it is much better policy to conciliate, or rather not to call into existence."

These arguments prevailed, and it was determined that the funeral should be rather in accordance with the imputed wealth than the dying directions of Hoffman. But it was easier to get mourning coaches than mourners for the deceased, who had few acquaintance, and no friends. Dr. H—— refused to testify any

by a desire to ingratiate themselves with the living heir, than to show respect to the dead testator.

Instead of being committed to the earth, the coffin was deposited beneath the church, in an extensive range of vaults, of which the meridian gloom was partially dispersed by a few candles flaring in sconces fastened to the wall, and an iron lamp suspended from the crown of the arch. To pass suddenly from the cheerful sunlight, from the bustle of city streets, and all the vitality of nature, into those dim abodes of death, where hundreds of confined bodies were reposing in grim silence, a dead and voiceless crowd, formed a rapid contrast that might well penetrate and awe the most impassive heart, even without the solemn accompaniments of the funeral ceremony.

Signal was the reprehension of avarice and selfishness afforded by the unsympathising assemblage standing around the coffin of Hoffman.

ings, how should he awaken them when dead? No sorrows had he soothed, no heart had he gladdened, no tear had he dried up; and no sorrows were felt, no heart throbbed, no tears were shed, when his remains, not more cold in death than had been his affections in life, were committed to their last resting-place. He had loved nothing but his money; and that ungrateful object of his idolatry, contributing little to the pleasures of his existence, had only served to embitter the moment when he was compelled to part from it for ever.

To the total indifference generally betrayed by the spectators of this interment there was one exception. It was offered by the son of Lomax. His innocent and susceptible heart, as yet unprofaned by one worldly feeling, and as free from the suspicion of guile or insincerity in others as from the practice of those vices in itself, felt nothing but an unmixed and ardent gratitude towards the benefactor who had given

his pusillanimity into a shuddering horror. In some legend or tradition he had read that the evil-doer, standing by the unburied corpse of him whom he had wronged, had been brought to shame and punishment by various preternatural manifestations ; and his superstitious mind, yielding implicit credence to these fictions, prepared him for the apparition of a miraculous arraigner, who should proclaim his forgery to the assembled spectators, and perhaps resuscitate the dead body to support his accusation. Every look that he encountered appeared to be that of an enemy seeking his life ; every movement startled him, every unusual echo of the hollow arches made his heart sink in his bosom.

With a willing step did he retreat from those dreary habitations of the dead, feeling, when he again saw the cheerful sun, and heard the busy hum of men, as if he had been reprieved at the very foot of the gallows. Even the strong-minded wife felt a load removed from her

Vandermeulen, an adjustment which, from his overreaching and covetous character, was not likely to be effected without some difficulty. Hoffman had anticipated and pointed out in his life-time the way in which his executors would probably be cheated by his partner, whose accounts and valuations, when they were given in, abundantly justified his predictions. Conversant with every detail of the business, and well aware that if he settled upon a basis so palpably unfair, he should be sanctioning a fraud upon himself to no insignificant amount, Lomax would have indignantly refused the proffered composition ; but his wife, whose keen knowledge of the world taught her that there were circumstances in which the wisest would be the most willing to submit to imposition, counselled him to moderate his anger, and even to sign and pass the accounts as they had been presented.

“ But why should we suffer ourselves to be

he wrote to his nephew Ruddock from Cheltenham, sending him his forgiveness, and apprising him that he had ordered a will to be prepared, in which he had made him his sole heir."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the husband, suddenly changing colour, "how unfortunate that we had not ascertained this alarming fact before! Had I known it, I would never, never — Alas! our dangers then are yet to come — we have surmounted nothing — we have yet to struggle for our property — nay, for our very lives."

"Our greatest danger lies in your unguarded voice and brainsick apprehensions. For my part, I am not sorry that we have yet a peril to encounter, if such indeed it be, for it keeps my courage from flagging, saves me as it were from myself, and serves to exercise my forethought. I will feel no fear, and want no vigilance, so long as there exists even an imaginary competitor, who may deprive our dear Benjamin of

now quickened into painful activity by the spect of a new danger, stimulated him to a it. To the great delight of Vandermeulen, felt that he was thus wreaking the most g ful and profitable of all revenges upon deceased partner, his unjust account was si and settled by the executors, and Lomax, now enabled to wind up the affairs, could attain the exact amount of the fortune he had fraudulently obtained.

One of the few points upon which the prove an invariable liberality is in estimating the wealth of those who are reputed aff since they not infrequently quadruple incomes, and sometimes make a still more rous addition to their riches. But in cases their liberality will be found to be i rent rather than real, the imputers of opulence generally following up their ex rated statements by all sorts of accusations against the supposititious Croesus for his

covereth a multitude of sins, and our's, not reconcile us to Heaven, will at least to conciliate our fellow-creatures."

Timidity and policy, rather than benevolence, prompted the husband to acquiesce in the suggestions: handsome contributions were accordingly bestowed on the leading churches, and the majority of the Bristolians acknowledged that the money was now in better hands than in the days of Hoffman, although some still claimed, "As to throwing away a few pounds in gratuities, *that* was the least they could do, considering how easily they got their money; but they need not have been so ostentatious about the matter."

Only two months had elapsed from the

assume the style of living to which our fortune entitles us, we shall be viewed with far different feelings. They who were lately our equals will hate us for being elevated above their sphere; the class to which we shall now belong will scowl upon us as upstarts and intruders; both, however unassuming may be our demeanour, will be jealous of our exaltation; both will gladly contribute to our downfall, should an opportunity be presented to them. Hostility such as this, even if it were not perilous to provoke, cannot be pleasant to encounter. While we are yet in fair favour, let us therefore withdraw to some new neighbourhood, where we are utterly unknown, and where consequently we can excite no such angry feelings."

"I care not, Jane, how soon we take our departure, for I tremble all over when I am interrogated, as I was yesterday by Dr. H——, on the subject of the will. But whither do you think of removing?"

"The house at Bermondsey, which was al-

“Certainly, certainly,” faltered Lomax; “but it is very dreadful to contemplate any such — The Lord be good unto us! When shall we depart?”

“There must be no appearance of alarm or flight in our removal. We will give out that we are about to travel for the health of our dear boy, which will plausibly account for our quitting Bristol. Change of air may indeed do him much good. My darling boy, my precious Benjamin! what would I not give to see thee restored to perfect health and strength! I have sometimes thought, in opposition to our medical adviser, that he would flourish better beneath a warmer sun. He has the look, has he not, dear Joel, of some exquisitely beautiful exotic flower, which pines beneath our inclement skies, and would recover all its splendour in a southern clime, or at least in some more genial atmosphere? I wonder that I should ever have given birth to such a spiritual

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Ah ! che per tutto io veggo  
Qualche ogetto funesto  
Che rinfaccia a quest' alma i suoi furori !  
Voi, solitari orrori  
Da seguarsi rimorsi,  
Difendete il mio cor.”

HYPSIBE

AT the eastern extremity of the parish of Mondsey, in the Borough of Southwark, a far removed from the banks of the Thames there stood at the period of our history a silent, gloomy, detached building, known by the name of Cypress House, an appellation evidently derived from a large tree of the description which shadowed the back of the structure. The fields by which it had been surrounded had long disappeared, and

which, seeming to belong neither to town nor country, and to combine here and there a farm appearance, or even an affectation of ornamental gardening, with manufacturing processes of no very dignified description, puzzle the stranger to decide upon their real character and object, while they equally exercise his ingenuity in conjecturing the description of natives by whom they can be occupied.

Such was the abode which had been chosen by Lomax for his present residence ; and, strange as it may sound, he had no sooner set his foot within it than he declared it to be expressly adapted to his purpose. It must be recollected that his taste was not of a very refined order, and that he sought other and more important recommendations than local attraction. Cypress House, with its garden and courtyard, was open and airy ; it was in the immediate vicinity of the river ; its roof was surmounted by a small circular chamber,

yet divested himself of the fear that he might suddenly be beleaguered by the officers of justice. Nor did he overlook, should such a crisis ever occur, the advantage of being near the river as a means of escape.

The bustle and excitement antecedent to their departure from Bristol, which had prevented the minds of Lomax and his wife from adapting themselves to their new position in society, or feeling the full and permanent effects of their crime, continued, with similar results, for some little while after their arrival at their new residence.

We have already noticed that the sudden enrichment of the former had rendered him so covetous that he had grudged the donation to his brother executor, and still more the disadvantageous settlement with Vandermeulen, a sacrifice to which he had only been induced to consent by his habitual deference to his wife. Cupidity, however, proceeds as often from pro-

for ever from his grasp. This epicurean easiness was but a modification of the reckless despair which sometimes urges the shipwrecked sailor to stave the liquor-casks, and to revive intoxication, ere he is irrevocablywhelmed in the remorseless deep ; although, in the case of Lomax, it developed itself in a calm and restrained system, instead of a frantic abandonment.

Under the influence of these feelings, the drawing and dining rooms of Cypress Hill were painted in gaudy colours, decorated with gilt mouldings and panels, and encumbered with sumptuous furniture, which, if it did not attest the good taste, at least indicated the wealth, of its proprietor. In every part of the establishment a similar character was recognizable. That Lomax, who had never traced his genealogy farther back than his grandfather, where all researches were lost in the darkness of antiquity, should affect heraldic hor-

The narrow circumstances in which Lomax had recently lived, so far from having extinguished that sensuality which was inherent in his nature, had only whetted his appetite for its indulgence, and he seemed resolved to make quick and ample atonement for the compulsory self-denial to which he had so long been subjected. A professed cook was engaged, with orders to send up a handsome and elaborate dinner every day, and a stock of rare and costly wines was deposited in the spacious cellarage of the old mansion, the master of which, in laying down his scheme of life, appeared to have perpetually whispered to himself, not perhaps without some secret misgiving as to the possible consequences of his crime: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Beyond this coarse ostentation and vulgar sensuality, his soul, even had he possessed the wealth of the Indies, would never have aspired.

about in his pony-chaise, followed by a servant mounted upon a tall coach horse. Upon one point she was not proof against the aggrandizement of her husband. He was the only gentleman, as it is termed, that is to say, the only idler, the only useless person, in the immediate neighbourhood. This was a pitiful object of ambition for so vigorous an intellect; but stronger minds than her's have been deluded by the fancied gentility of inoccupation, a distinction which very often contributes little to the respectability, and less to the happiness, of its possessor. The glorious privilege "of being master of one's own time" is but a sad and barren honour, if it makes its wearer a slave to himself and the victim of ennui. They who have been born and bred to constant employment are very apt to make the discovery that idleness is an oppressive task-master to all those who have not served it by a regular apprenticeship, and become accustomed to its sway.

that used to preserve her from greater evil, the tedium of life ; and more wistfully for the clear conscience once proved her shield against self. Neither her health nor her spirits against this constant corrosion, which more wasting because she refused it a tear or a complaint ; and the disheartened Mrs. Lomax would have fallen into utter dejection but for her son. "Heaven," she would sometimes ejaculate, having gazed upon his amended looks and animated countenance, until tears suffused her eyes — "thank Heaven he is better ; he is evidently recovering and will enjoy existence and prosperity for

that he was constitutionally religious, a tendency which, being hardly natural in one so young, had been ascribed by some to a morbid sympathy with his debilitated frame. This does not, however, appear to have been the case, for, his devotion gathering strength with his body, became more fervent and intense as he exhibited symptoms of convalescence. But, let us not be misunderstood. His was not the religion of controversial divinity, or of creeds, forms, and dogmas; *that* would, indeed, have been unnatural in a youth of fifteen — but of love. He was truly a creature of love. His yearning heart sought to evince its gratitude to Heaven for the blessings showered upon his family, and for his own apparent convalescence, by suffering its affections to overflow upon all animated beings.

In his charitable visits to the poor, he was often accompanied by his sister, whom we feel that we ought to have introduced to our reader

almost rival that of the mother, should a worthy cause call for its exertion, they were accompanied by a clear manifestation of all the gentler and more feminine virtues, a winning affectionate tone of voice, and a suavity of countenance, to which Mrs. Lomax could make but small pretension. Although her hair approached to the dark hue of the mother's, and the fringe of her eyelashes was quite black, her complexion, only less delicate than that of her sickly brother, was fair and transparent. From the peculiar expression of the eyebrows, and the seriousness of the mouth, she wore, when quiescent, a slightly melancholy look, which was succeeded by a smile of the most endearing benignity, the moment she began to speak, or was addressed by another. She did not strike at first sight ; she did not sparkle, she did not fascinate ; but, her winning loveliness, growing upon the affections of the spectator, was felt the more thrillingly, because she herself seemed

his talents—for there had always been a morbid precocity in his intellect—and his singular beauty, entitled him, as she imagined, to the exclusive attachment and admiration of all who knew him ; and, being never so happy as when she was testifying her own sense of his superiority, she was rather gratified than hurt when in this respect she was imitated by her parents or her friends. Their lowly condition at Bristol she had regretted only as it diminished the indulgences rendered almost indispensable by the delicate health of her brother ; and now she rejoiced in their sudden and unexpected elevation, rather upon his account than her own.

Mary, nevertheless, was no faultless monster ; we have not the smallest wish to raise her above the failings and feelings, we will not say of her sex, of which it is our pride never to have spoken disparagingly, but of our common nature. The comparative splendour with which she was surrounded at Cypress House, the rich

cerned, the unobtruding but observant and penetrative eye of Mary had latterly discovered unequivocal symptoms of a diminution rather than an increase of happiness from their aggrandizement. Her father, indeed, derived evident, and, as it appeared to her, an almost unworthy gratification from the pleasures of the table, to which he devoted himself with sensual abandonment that absorbed a great portion of his time and the whole of his faculties, though these, it must be confessed, were never of a very aspiring order. With him the dinner of the day was the chief study of the day; its preparation and demolition became serious affairs; and his indulgence in the bottle, now frequently continued, even when quite alone, to a late hour, did not always stop short of excess. But, to his anxious daughter, it seemed that he betook himself to these gross enjoyments, less from positive epicurism than in the hope of escaping from some secret grief

with a shorter and more convenient access to the river, he had caused an opening to be made, and a strong door to be inserted, in the extreme corner of the garden wall ; but, in these broken ejaculations, which his daughter, however, unintentionally, was sometimes compelled to overhear, she could not but suspect the alteration to have been made with a different motive, from the often-repeated phrase of “ Escape by the new door—on board ship—sail to America—ha ! ”

From these evidences of a perturbed spirit, Mary, who had noticed them with the most painful solicitude, came to the conclusion that he was a prey to some stifled wretchedness, or living in the apprehension of some imminent calamity, of the nature of which she could not even form a conjecture. As to the possibility of his being harassed by remorse for any heinous crime, it was a supposition that never entered her innocent and unsuspecting

She had become much more silent than before, sitting often and for a length of time in gloomy communion with her own secret thoughts ; her temper, hitherto rendered remarkably equable by the strength and fortitude of her mind, was now often morose or impetuous, particularly towards her husband, whom she rebuked with an unmeasured scorn, whenever he gave way to fits of despondency, muttered to himself, or betrayed any unfounded alarm. On these latter occasions her own countenance would assume a look of desperate defiance, and indeed she seemed prepared to make war upon the whole world, or at least to defend herself to the last against its attacks, for she caused additional barricades to be put to the doors, invariably examined them herself before she retired to rest, and always kept loaded pistols by her bed-side, assigning as a reason for these precautions that the neighbourhood was not a particularly safe one, and that their plate and

thizing with the sorrows of her parents, althou she could not divine their source, already beg to doubt whether the change in their circumstances which had wrought this ominous eff upon their feelings might not be rather deem a misfortune than a blessing.

ability by the external manifestations of wealth, and coveted a man's acquaintance with an avidity pretty accurately proportioned to the number of the carriages and the horses that he kept, and the taxes that he paid, eagerly sought admission to Cypress House, without staying to inquire whether their new neighbours were likely to prove pleasant or desirable acquaintance. Many circumstances concurred to quicken their advances.

It seemed very mysterious that a perfect stranger, not engaged in any business, and having no connexions in the vicinity, should plant himself in a situation which presented but few attractions to a man of fortune, who had all the world before him in selecting his place of residence. He could not be an adventurer seeking to obtain credit in order that he might decamp, for his house was his own, and he paid ready money for every thing ; nor could concealment be his object, since he as-

sumption in the over-finery of Lomax's house and equipage, which the men attributed to the vulgar taste of the wife, and the women, for there is a strong *esprit de corps* in the sexes, to the same defect in the husband; but all admitted that, in their personal demeanour, the new-comers were plain, unpretending people, who appeared to have sprung from the same class as their neighbours, and consequently were not likely to repel their advances, or to mortify their feelings by any affected airs of superiority.

With these various motives to draw them together, the tenants of Cypress House were soon upon visiting terms with a little circle in the vicinity, while they formed a close intimacy with two or three families, one of which we shall forthwith introduce to our readers.

Jacob Bryant, a substantial wharfinger, and owner of a stout brig called the *Charming Kitty*, was a short, thickset, person, whose ru-

and important air as he sat in his balcony of a summer evening, smoking his pipe, or paced the flag-stones with which the wharf was bordered, gazing at the vessels as they worked up the Pool, that he had an abundant consciousness of his own independence.

Of his wife, a vulgar woman, who piqued herself upon her good taste and her gentility, we shall say little at present, in order that we may introduce the reader to his niece, Helen Owen. This good-looking, good-tempered, kind-hearted, lively girl, having been left an orphan a few years after she quitted school, with a handsome fortune in money, besides other property, had been invited by her uncle, who had been named her guardian, to take up her residence at Eagle Wharf, in the secret hope, for the good man was a shrewd calculator, that she might be ultimately secured as a wife by his son Ambrose.

Young as she was, Helen, who had received

But before she agreed to fix herself at a spot as Eagle Wharf, she made a condition which would have reconciled her to almost any abode, in stipulating that she should be accompanied by Rose Mayhew, a girl nearly the same age as herself, who had been her bosom-friend at school, and had quit it at the same time. Within three months of that period, Rose, also, was left an orphan, without any relations who could assist her, and without a guinea ; under which distressing circumstances she was about to accept a situation as governess, when Helen Owen, then residing at a distance, accidentally learnt her intention, and, hurrying to her lodgings, accompanied by her father, pressed her, with the most importunate earnestness, to accept an asylum in their house, an offer to which the timid, almost broken-hearted orphan, who was ill-fitted to encounter the storms of adversity, responded with tears of gratitude.

they are not allied by the ties of consanguinity—  
Now I want you to refute this libel, and to—  
attest the sincerity of your friendship by ac—  
companying me in my dreary pilgrimage to—  
Eagle Wharf, and the unromantic purlieus of—  
Horsleydown.”

“Dearest Helen,” cried her friend, pressing her affectionately to her bosom, while her face was suffused with emotion, “I see all the kindness of your heart, all the refined generosity that veils itself in the disguise of an earnest supplication. I wish not to be a burthen to any one, but Heaven knows that the very thought of our separation is almost insupportable. I desire no better fate than to live and die with you.”

“Nay, nay, not so fast, my little enthusiast. There is time enough to talk of dying, and, before you even decide upon living with me, I wish you to weigh the full extent of the sacrifice you will be called upon to make. A region

ment with which not even marriage shall interfere. If I am the first to enter into the holy state of matrimony, you shall continue to be my companion, until some discerning suitor petitions for your hand. If you are the first to be led to the Hymeneal altar — that, I believe, is the established newspaper phrase — I shall still inflict myself upon you, until some hapless victim releases you, and fetters himself, by claiming me as his *cara sposa*.”

“*My marriage*,” sighed Rose, “is an alternative little likely to occur, for who would select for his wife a timid, helpless, inexperienced girl without a shilling?”

“Not a fool, perhaps, nor a worldling; but the man of sense, whom you are the most likely to love, would be the most likely to love you. You are a treasure in yourself, my dear Rose, though you do not know it; but why do you tremble thus, and why are those bright eyes still dim with tears? You must not give

To account for the warmth and the firmness of Helen's attachment, we must state that Rose Mayhew was one of those fascinating confiding, endearing, sylph-like creatures whom it is almost impossible not to love. Her clear, olive-coloured skin, with the polish of marble, was as soft as satin, and almost as transparent as amber; its whole surface becoming instantly suffused by every passing emotion that quickened the circulation of the blood beneath, while her extreme sensitiveness gave an incessant play and animation to her countenance. Dark, unconfined, and naturally curling, her profuse locks were so apt to fall over her face, that she had acquired the habit of frequently shaking them back, disclosing for a minute or two her high and ample forehead; but it was difficult to admire as she deserved her round, earnest-looking, hazel eyes because they were instantly bent down with the bashfulness of girlhood whenever

she excited. Upon these occasions she would start away from the piano, hurry into a corner, cross her hands upon her bosom, and suffer her ringlets to fall over her blushing cheeks, with a girlish, trembling, bashfulness that had often been mistaken for affectation, a failing from which few persons were so perfectly free as Rose Mayhew. Not content with this unmerited imputation, some of her schoolfellows had bestowed upon her the nickname of the inspired idiot, her diffidence and timorousness being of such an extreme and morbid character that, when noticed, she would sometimes be completely overcome with confusion, when she would hesitate, stammer, and talk as incoherently, as if smitten by a temporary fatuity.

Of Bryant's son Ambrose, who was now abroad in the command of the *Charming Kitty*, we need not give any present account; but we must not pass over his head-clerk and

some degree of composure, and then sto to Eagle Wharf, to ask the advice and  
ance of Mrs. Bryant, to whom she v  
tantly related.

All mention of the gaming-house  
been suppressed by the prudent mother  
Bryant, after inveighing against the f  
improvidence of young men, and the  
tendency of speculations, agreed to con  
husband as to what was best to be do  
Jacob, who was a kind-hearted mar  
want of a confidential assistant, con  
receive young Hunter in that capacit

Delighted at the thought of beir  
to support his mother and sister, i  
humble a manner, Hunter accepted  
tion, although he knew it to be on  
both by education and taste, he wa  
qualified. Never, perhaps, had i  
been more signally misplaced. A  
petuous in his temperament, fon

ment, but for the intercessions and apo of his mother, and the good nature of B who was induced to overlook his repeated cadilloes of this nature out of consider for his family. Although the wharfinger no very high opinion of his clerk's ability of his capacity for ever becoming a n business, he could place implicit confidence in his integrity, which formed an additional motive for retaining him in his employment especially when combined with the recollection that, if he dismissed him, he would probably be called upon to support his family, who had no other means of maintaining themselves.

“Well, dear Rose!” cried Helen Over her friend, on their first instalment in the new abode, “what think you of Eagle Wharf and its uncouth-looking inmates? Pray speak your mind freely; I give you a *carte blanche* to do them as much as you please. If they were strangers, I should not be so liberal, but

average of his class, or affect, by some silly pretensions, to set himself above it ; a failing of which I could see nothing whatever in Mr. Bryant, and a good deal in his wife. Her expensive dress, so much too fine for the occasion, that patronizing air which coarse minds mistake for condescension, and her repeated declaration that she piqued herself upon her taste and her gentility, sufficiently convince me that she has but slender pretensions to either."

"Ah, my poor aunt ! you have let her off too cheap, but I have a regard for her, nevertheless ; and so we will enter into a compact never to compete with her in talking of her gentility and her taste. We must believe in them as we do in ghosts, without seeing them. But what say you to our *locale*, and how, think you, shall you like a wharf for your residence ? "

"At all events, it is not so noisy as I had expected."

“Nay, but we are not altogether with them. We have half a dozen cranes, so domestic that they never move from the house, though I will not answer for your hearing their voices, especially when they lack food. Then there is the large gilt eagle of the house which occasionally creaks and screams as if it were crying out for food. And, finally, on an all-important day when my uncle gives an annual dinner to the Prime and Wardens of the Fishmongers’ Company, the Wharf is visited by a fine lively turtle, not of the common sort, but of that more interesting species which yields the precious green fat.”

“Nay, if you run on at this rate, dear Henry, you will soon furnish forth an inanimate anatomy. At all events, your fine spirits have not hitherto suffered by the change.”

“Heaven forefend that they should! for I will not take my life when you take the means which I live. I suppose, however, they will rise

“Interesting ! that term is so universally bestowed upon man, woman, and child, when no more definite eulogy can be applied, that I consider it a disparagement rather than a praise. I hate an interesting young man, I am not quite sure that I like a modest—alias, a sheepfaced one — and as to the reserve for which you give credit to this grave-looking wielder of the quill, it is nothing in the world but pride. It is not want of self-possession, for his deportment is unembarrassed enough, nor the diffidence of one who fears that he is beneath his company, but rather the cold distance of a man who fancies himself superior to his associates, and is ashamed of his situation. The young hero is a decayed gentleman, it seems. Did you observe how his cheeks reddened, and his eyes flashed, when uncle reminded him that he had twice omitted to call at the Custom House, and told him that his

He has a very picturesque head, and his eyes are the most expressive I ever saw."

"Why the man's a man, as Volante says but the fact is that I think nobody good-looking who wears a woe-begone countenance. I have a natural, perhaps I should rather say an unnatural, or at least an unfeeling, antipathy to the tristful and dolorous."

"Not unfeeling, dearest Helen ; for oh ! how tenderly have you loved and comforted me when I was unhappy !"

"But I positively doat upon you when you are cheerful ; so prithee do not sympathise so far with this grave, but not very reverend signor, as to acquire his lackadaisical look."

There was a pause of some minutes, when Rose, who seemed to be interested in the subject upon which they had been discoursing, recurred to it by saying, "Surely, Helen, you will not deny that he was well dressed."

"I did not notice him so narrowly as-

## CHAPTER IX.

“ These spirits of sense, in fantasy’s high court,  
Judge of the forms of objects, ill or well ;  
And so do they send a good or ill report  
Down to the heart, where all affections dwell.”

ALTHOUGH Helen was not sincere in her confidence of Alfred Hunter, she had accidentally stumbled upon the truth when she affirmed that reserve proceeded from pride rather than diffidence. An anxiety to avoid altercation with Bryant, for he felt the imprudence of alienating his only friend, led him to take refuge in habitual silence, sometimes so strictly, we might almost said so sullenly, preserved as to scarcely less offensive than the petulance which it was substituted. In this, as in other matters, his hasty feelings and rash judgment

lect or incompetency ; too poor to be a g  
man, and too proud to submit with a  
grace to poverty, his life was a conflict  
posite feelings, and his character an ap  
anomaly.

Although he had at first exhibited a d  
almost a haughty, reserve towards the n  
mates, anticipating that they would prov  
gling girls, who would look down up  
humble clerk with something like con  
or who would at all events think they con  
an honour in noticing him, his coldness r  
wore off when he found that they no  
comported themselves towards him with a  
affability, but even seemed to seek occ  
for treating him with a marked respect.  
jealousy which anticipates and resent  
superiority of another, even though it l  
manifested, and which in the victims of  
fortune is so apt to degenerate into an ur  
pride, now melted away like snow befor

straint of one who, not feeling quite sure of his position, fears to make or even to reciprocate, any advances towards familiarity.

With Rose Mayhew, however, he felt himself on a footing of comparative ease and intimacy. There was something so winning in her retiring girlishness, and beautiful confusion; her manner, when she addressed him, was so gentle, gracious, and confiding; and her views and opinions, when he could succeed in drawing them out, were so much in unison with his own, that he quickly found a charm in her society which tended more to reconcile him to his situation than all the considerations of prudence and duty. Even Eagle Wharf, with its vulgar and revolting accessories, was rendered more endurable to him by some remarks which she dropped, perhaps with that benevolent object, on his expressing an apprehension that so ardent an admirer of nature and of the picturesque as Miss Mayhew could find very little

the medium of communication between the most distant nations, and consequently as one of the great civilizers of the world : as a silent, dustless road, which, regularly rising and falling, flowing backwards and forwards, receives no reparation, and yet remains for ever the same ; a road so soft that we can plunge our bodies into its depths, and over which, nevertheless, weights that would crush a solid rock are drawn by the winged coursers of the air, or impelled at full speed by an impalpable vapour."

"When you have fairly thrown the reins upon the neck of your imagination," cried Helen, "I know by experience that we have nothing to do but to let you gallop away until you are out of breath."

"May I beseech you not to interrupt your friend?" whispered Hunter, impatiently, "for methinks I already begin to look upon this turbid stream with a reverence to which I have hitherto been a stranger."

flected the gay banner, and echoed to the me ~~me~~ music of the laughing water-party, while oth ~~er~~ may yet be warm with the last breath or ~~the~~ convulsive clutch of the drowning suicide."

The enthusiast paused — but her auditors, both of whom were now equally averse from turning the flow of her ideas by a comment, remained gazing at her without speaking, a silence which seemed suddenly to have brought her to herself, for she started, coloured deeply, and exclaimed, in an altered voice, "Good Heavens ! how have I been babbling ! I fear I have uttered a sad rhapsody. I was scarcely aware that—Helen, Helen ! why, why did you not check me ! 'The river—did I wander ? what river ? —Who talked of a drowned suicide ? —How *could* I be so silly ? "

Her confusion becoming increased by her nervous anxiety to escape from it, she continued to ejaculate in a still more incoherent strain, until she suddenly paused, shook her profuse

leafy bower. "Unkind Helen!" she continued, recovering herself, "how *could* you see my Pegasus running away with me, and not make a single snatch at his bridle?" On perceiving their companions, of whose presence she seemed for the moment to have been unaware, her eyes were instantly bent to the ground—she clasped her hands together, exclaiming in a soft supplicating tone, while a thousand blushing apparitions suffused her face and bosom, "Pray, pray forgive me, Mr. Hunter, I quite forgot myself," and, so saying, she vanished from the room like a flying sylph.

"What a beautiful, what a gifted creature!" cried Hunter, in an impassioned voice. "She has all the loveliness, and more than all the talent, of a Grecian Pythoness, for her's is the inspiration of genius."

"She is indeed a most extraordinary girl," said Helen; "but though I admire, I am not quite sure that I like these enthusiastic day-dreams."

Here's an order from Higgins and Spratt *for* the twenty-two casks of tallow, and you must see them weighed and delivered immediately."

"So ends my pleasant dream," muttered the clerk between his clenched teeth ; "and now for the hateful, the disgusting realities of Eagle Wharf. I am a clerk, a servant, a slave, and must resume my drudgery at the bidding of the overseer."

So saying, he betook himself to the warehouse, where, with an indignant heart, and looks that betrayed his aversion, he performed his distasteful task. If he discharged it without making any mistakes, it must be attributed to chance rather than to the sedulity of his attention, since his thoughts, during the whole process, were with Rose Mayhew, a direction from which they rarely deviated for several following days, although in that period he saw very little of the object that engrossed them. The timid girl, imagining that she had not maintained a

## CHAPTER X.

.. We 're both love's captives, but with fate so cross,  
One must be happy by the other's loss."

SHAKESPEARE.

No man who has once had a reputation for cleverness forgets to fancy himself as vigorous as ever in his intellect ; and no *çi-devant* Belle either loves the recollection of her former beauty, or can be brought to believe that she has quite survived it. In this latter category must be placed Mrs. Bryant, who, having once possessed the complexional red and white of a milkmaid, with a crumby figure to match, had been thought good-looking, and still considered herself in that predicament, although her frame had assumed a shapeless rotundity, and her

such an evident look of discomposure that Helen immediately inquired its cause.

“Why, my dear,” was the reply, “it’s only the old story, and yet I cannot help being vexed at it. Mr. B., he has been complaining again of Mr. Hunter for inattention and forgetfulness, and what not, and, as I know he keeps him solely out of regard to me, though he can hardly be called a relation of mine, only a very distant connexion, and I have persuaded him to overlook many things done by him, or omitted to be done, which is all the same, yet he and him are always a-bickering, which is particular unpleasant, and I must say the young man does not by any means treat him with proper respect.”

Knowing that her aunt entertained too good an opinion of herself to suspect any one of quizzing her, Helen would sometimes venture on such an open strain of banter, that her timid friend sate upon tenterhooks in the apprehen-

day that he had more pride than prudence, he reddened like a turkey cock, and, drawing himself bolt upright, 'Sir,' says he, 'a proper pride,' says he, 'is the only thing of which fortune has been unable to deprive me, and I value it accordingly,' says he. Now, that's what I call impertinence."

"And that is what I call a becoming dignity," thought Rose, whose dependent situation, coupled with the recollection of her former prospects, enabled her fully to sympathize with the party inculpated.

"And to speak in that swaggering way to my husband," resumed the wife, "who is not only his employer, and indeed his master, if you come to that, but who could buy half the neighbourhood out and out, that is, if they were all to pay their debts. I scorn to boast of Mr. B.'s property, and indeed I need n't, for his business and his buildings speak for themselves; but, when a man's money proves

matters, that most people of good taste have a good temper, and upon this principle your kindness *might* be pushed to a fault. By the bye, I see you have got a new bonnet, and I never beheld a more elegant one; it is quite a darling, so simple, so neat, and so becoming, too. This sunflower and the crimson pæony make such a sweet contrast, and this love of a blue hollyhock running up between them! Look, Rose, did you ever see such a perfect *bijou*?"

The party thus appealed to scarcely knew which way to turn her eyes, for she expected every moment that the aunt would detect and resent the ridicule of this pretended admiration; she forced herself, however, to give a faint acquiescence, and Mrs. Bryant replied with a bridling complacency:—"Why, taste, you see, is a gift, and comes natural like. I was always remarkable for it, without taking any trouble to acquire it; and, as to this bonnet, I must say I think it particular genteel."

to broad and barefaced raillery, or it will get you some day into a sad scrape."

"Broad and barefaced was it? then it was appropriate, for it was like the object to whom it was addressed. Besides, the end sanctifies the means. What would have become of poor Mrs. Hunter and her daughter, if her son had been dismissed from an employment which constitutes their sole support? To propitiate my aunt, and secure her interference, I was obliged to play upon her foibles, and who would not have done the same in the cause of humanity, to say nothing of the amusement to ourselves?"

"Nay, I approve of your object, and do justice to your motives. I was only fearful of her discovering your mockery. I am glad you prevailed upon her to interfere, for it would be shocking that poor Mrs. Hunter and her daughter should be exposed to want."

"That was my feeling, and I am glad to find

chance of which reward she would prolong her sitting with all the exemplary patience of an angler, waiting a whole morning for a nibble.

Latterly, these aquatic offerings of personal admiration had been transferred to the smart new bonnet, or the showy pelisse, not always unaccompanied by remarks, in which she had more than once caught the objectionable word "vulgar;" but, as she attributed all such inapplicable terms to ignorance and want of taste, she retained her seat, in the hope of eliciting a more acceptable homage from more discerning passengers. As her present bonnet was equally well calculated to catch the eye, and suit the taste of nautical critics, it had received its due meed of praise from two boat companies, in the course of half an hour, success which rendered her insensible to the lapse of time, and restored her to her young friends, when she was summoned to join them in a mood of more than ordinary graciousness.

Mrs. Hunter, and I am glad I thought of calling on her, for she is really a very good sort of woman, and, as I told you, was once in better circumstances, which accounts for her being sort of connexion of mine. She is a kind-hearted, simple-minded body, and would really be a pleasant companion enough, if she did not always appear to be thinking of some household trifles in the midst of every conversation, however serious. She will be glad to learn, poor thing! that all differences between her son and Mr. B. are once more made up, for she knows that they are all completely dependent on my husband, as I have indeed more than once reminded the young man of, though I always did it with delicacy, for, though one does happen to be superior to others in point of fortune, I don't think it by any means particular genteel to boast of it."

"From that proposition few will dissent," said Helen; "I have always considered purse-

STRICTLY FORMAL. THERE WAS AN AIR OF PERFECT  
 RESERVE. HER MANNER IN CONVERSATION APPROACH TO  
 REGULARITY MORE THE PARTIAL. THIS ASTONISHED BOTH  
 HELEN AND ROSE. MRS. HENDER, AN AMIABLE-  
 LOOKING PERSON WHOSE PRESENTLY GRIZZLED  
 HAIR WAS KEPT IN ORDER BY A CLOSE CAP THAT  
 SEEMED TO HAVE JUST LEFT THE STARCHER'S HAND,  
 AND WHOSE VOICE MORE EXHIBITED A QUAKER-LIKE  
 SERIOUSNESS, RECEIVED HER VISITANTS WITH A WELL-BREED  
 EASE, AND INTRODUCED TO HELEN AND ROSE HER  
 DAUGHTER HARRIET, WHOSE DEJECTED APPEARANCE  
 IN SPITE OF THE FAINT SMILE WITH WHICH SHE  
 GREETED THEM, JUSTIFIED MRS. BRYANT'S DESCRIPTION.

The poor girl had experienced a disappointment in her affections, which might well account for this habitual pensiveness. The object of her attachment, who had no fault but his poverty, was to have purchased a partnership with her small marriage portion; but, when the brother's unfortunate speculations incapa-

WILL BE ASKED OF HOW SHE CAN BE  
WILL BE ASKED OF A BY HERSELF. THE  
THE ANSWER BE AT THE RIGHT OF HER REVEREND.  
[SHE SPOKE IN A WITHOUT HESITATION: SHE WAS  
SUFFERING FROM AN ANGER, AND AFFECTED  
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THE MRS. BRYAN WAS HER REVEREND HER COM-  
PARENTS IN HER. SHE WAS A WIFE THAT BE-  
LIEVE WAS IN HERSELF. SHE WAS COME TO LIVE  
WITH THEM, AND SHE WAS A POOR FRIEND ENTIRELY  
DEPENDENT ON HER. SHE CONTINUED IN A TONE OF  
CONDESCENSION, WHICH HAD THE EFFECT OF IMPER-  
TINENCE WITHOUT MEANING IT. "Well, to be  
sure, Mrs. Hunter, how tidy and comfortable  
every thing looks, and so it always does when  
I come here. I declare I don't see but what  
people in ever so small lodgings, even over  
a shop, and without hardly a guinea in their  
pockets, *may* make themselves as happy, as

fortunate not to have any disagreeables or nuisances ; for, though it's a dyer's, we seldom have any *very* bad smells, and we are never annoyed by the soap-boilers at No. 10, except when the wind's in the west ; and, as to the noise of the linseed-mills, I have got so used to it, that I scarcely hear it. We have much to be thankful for, and I hope we both feel ——. La ! here's my thimble after all in the nutmeg-grater ! What a hunt I have had for it, to be sure !”

“ How soon one may get reconciled to things,” said Mrs. Bryant ; “ but, after all, people *must* cut their coat according to their cloth.”

“ Very true,” resumed Mrs. Hunter ; “ and exposed as we all are to the vicissitudes of life, we cannot be too grateful, however small may be the portion of cloth that is left to us. Well-a-day ! we live in a strange world, but we must all look forward to ——, Harriet ! don't

you hear the cry? Run and tell Sarah to buy a pennyworth of cat's-meat for dear Tabby."

Blushing at her mother's indecorous peroration, Harriet hastened to obey the mandate; Rose, afraid to look her friend in the face, lest she should be provoked to sympathetic laughter, kept her eyes fixed upon the floor; and Helen, who always found it difficult to conceal her sense of the ludicrous, started from her chair, and began to examine one of the framed drawings with great apparent attention, an act which only drew upon her the notice that she meant to elude.

"That is painted by my dear Alfred," said the proud mother; "is it not beautiful? He was considered an excellent amateur artist before our circumstances altered; but he has no time, now, poor fellow, for any such amusements."

Helen summoned Rose to look at the drawing, which was really a superior performance,

when both expressed their admiration in warm terms that Mrs. Bryant joined them and, after peering at it for a moment, claimed :—" A very pretty landscape, I declare, but I always regret when I see a painted windmill, that they can't make the sails round, it would look so much more natural like, wouldn't it, now? I had no idea Hunter could draw so well, for he doesn't have a particular good hand."

" Perhaps you are not aware," added her mother, " that he sings very prettily. He has had little or no instruction, but he is able to have a very good bass voice."

" Well, now, that's rather odd, isn't it? he doesn't speak particularly gruff."

" I am very glad we have discovered this accomplishment," said Helen; " I have ordered a piano, and, as my friend, Miss Mew, is an excellent vocalist, we shall, perhaps prevail on Mr. Hunter to accompany her."

shall forget my own name next—if you did but know how good these dear children are to me; how they are perpetually thinking of me; how they watch night and day; how they study for me—my heart's so full that I can hardly—and indeed what could *I* do to reward them but I pray to Heaven every night that ——.

The fond mother, whose voice had been gradually breaking, strove in vain to complete a sentence: her nostrils dilated, her eyes glistened, and she would, doubtless, have melted into tears, but that, as her looks fell upon a window, a sudden turn was given to her rambling thoughts, and, after a moment's delay, she exclaimed in her usual tone:—“What a fine donkey! and what a shame for that boy to beat it so!”

By tapping at the window, holding up her finger, and shaking her head at the offender, she procured a momentary cessation of blows, when she resumed, “I cannot bear

Harriet, "I must say that it seldom smoke except when we have visitants. Never & I so much regret its rudeness as at the present moment, since you might, perhaps, have prolonged your stay had it been upon its good behaviour."

Helen and Rose, to whom these words were addressed, declared that they should be delighted to renew their visit at an early period, expressing a hope at the same time that Mr Hunter would frequently favour them with a call at Eagle Wharf. "My dearest Rose Meaux!" cried the former, when they were once more in the street, "methinks you are—I—give me credit for the humility of the comparison—bear a close resemblance to the far famed butcher, who instituted such a diligent search for the very knife which he held in his mouth, since we have been searching the neighbourhood for pleasant society, without being aware that we had a Phoenix, a nonsuch, at

is either irritable and proud, or silent and sullen."

"He may be good-natured without being good-tempered," whispered Helen to Rose "though I can fancy him to be both when he is at home, in his own element, and neither when he breathes the uncongenial atmosphere of the Wharf; uncongenial, I mean, when *we* are not there."

"It must be so," replied her friend: "how delightful is it to contemplate a family in which there reigns such a perfect harmony of taste and feeling! Even about the old lady, in spite of her awkward *contretemps*, and her sudden episodes *à propos* to nothing, there is a certain air which raises her above her sphere, and compels you to respect even while you smile at her. Did you ever observe what a moral dignity, quite independent of station, is imparted by the affections and the virtues? Nay, I have sometimes thought that their possessors gene-

and turn-out acquaintance. Mr. B. can't bear it : he wouldn't give a farthing for an acquaintance without a good spread, and prime old port, and the best of every thing. He gives it himself, you see, and, therefore, he has a right to look for it in others. Makeshifts and substitutes he can't abide ; he calls it swindling. We are going now to the Lomaxes at Cypress House, the family you have heard so much about, and who, as I am informed, give capital dinners of three courses, with real champagne and plate in the handsomest style imaginable. There *are* inuendoes circulating against them, but they deserve no attention, for, people living in this way, and keeping carriages and horses, cannot be otherwise than perfectly respectable ; and all the insinuations, I find, come from those that cannot get invited to partake of their good cheer."

" Let me congratulate you, my sweet little Rose de Meaux," cried Helen, as they returned from their visit to Cypress House. " You seem

"I ought not to laugh at you," said Helen  
"for I, too, little subject as I am to any enthusiastic surprises, have been fascinated by his sister, more than I can well express to you. Placid without being inanimate, sedate and yet not grave, Mary Lomax seems to unite high principles and great strength of character with an affectionate heart and varied powers of amusement. In short, I am delighted with her, and felt more than once tempted to exclaim, in the language of the mock German play, 'A sudden thought strikes me; let us swear an eternal friendship.' "

"Who is enthusiastic, now, Helen?"

"I plead guilty; I have been as much smitten as yourself: I have fallen in love at first sight."

"To that charge I do *not* plead guilty."

"Well, then, the young gentleman has fallen in love with you."

"I could almost stake my existence that not

## CHAPTER XI.

" You plead each other's cause. What witness but  
Ourselves and Heaven.

Guilt witnesses for guilt ! Hence love and friend  
You have no longer place in human breasts."

ALL :

It had been agreed between Mr. and Mrs. Lomax that, to avoid all unnecessary perplexity, they should converse as little as possible upon the subject of the fabricated will ; but it was much easier to make this stipulation than to observe it. That which was ever uppermost in their waking thoughts, and not seldom presented to them in the appalling visions of the night, it was impossible to banish altogether from their lips, at least from those of the

his fantastical panics, and general imbecility of mind and purpose, which became every day more conspicuous, fretted her temper, and added to the depression of her spirits.

If the newspapers contained any intelligence from South America, he would shake like an aspen leaf, and express a hundred vague and foolish misgivings as to the return of Edward Ruddock : every vessel that he saw passing up the river was converted by his guilty conscience into an arrival from that quarter, bringing the rightful heir, to expose and punish the usurper of his inheritance : and every letter, of which he did not recognize the writing in the address, was opened with trembling hands, lest it should come from the same dreaded individual, or from some law-agent, announcing his intention to dispute the validity of the will.

But the terrors and visions of the day were as nothing compared to the phantasmagoria of his sleeping hours, when the nightmare be

than be the slave of its dastard fictions. Suppose me not to catch the infection of your terror ; to live in constant dread is to realize nay, to exceed, its worst apprehensions : death is a thousand times preferable to such a miserable and contemptible existence."

" Ah, Jane, Jane ! " would the unhappy man reply ; " if this be true, as to my course I know it to be, surely I deserve your compassion, rather than upbraidings and revivings. You are the last that should taunt me with my wretchedness. Who entailed it upon me ? Who tempted me to commit the crime which —— ? "

" She who lifted you out of the mire of poverty and contempt, " interposed the wife with a disdainful look. " She who redeemed you from a worse than Egyptian bondage and dependence, and made you a gentleman, a station, at least, if not in soul : she who surrounded you with the respect and homage th-

and terror. The arch-enemy of mankind, who,

“wiser than before,  
Now tempts by making rich, not making poor,”

had, indeed, succeeded in destroying the happiness as well as the innocence of this ill-fated, though seemingly prosperous, couple. In all their former trials, which had been neither few nor light, they had derived consolation and support from an unaccusing conscience, as well as from their mutual accord and affection. Yielding a willing submission to the stronger mind of his wife, the husband had found in her talents and energy not only a source of pride, but a stimulus of attachment; while his spouse, whose disposition was somewhat imperious, became reconciled to the comparative imbecility of her partner, in consideration of the undisputed ascendancy which it enabled her to exercise.

As there are discords in music which con-

riage up to the fatal moment when she conceived the project of forging the will, the conduct of Mrs. Lomax had been so free from reproach, that her husband had revered her principles, not less than he admired her great powers of mind. But this foundation of regard and esteem she herself had for ever away, and he began to look upon her first with indifference, and then with a concealed suspicion, as the insidious tempter, whose mimic menaces and blandishments had placed his body and soul in the most perilous predicament, and had entailed upon him all those horrors and miseries by which he was incessantly beleaguered.

Nor could he retain his habitual deference even for her intellectual superiority, when she had lost the sense of her moral worth, and when she conceived that in perpetrating a crime she had committed a grievous and irretrievable mistake. Not only did he now presume to argue

she held it at the will of one whom she now began to hate as much as she had ever despised him, and whose new-born insolence of manner she sometimes checked with over-estimating ridicule, and sometimes with the most withering contempt. It was a consolation to her that he could not well endanger her safety without compromising his own ; she felt moreover, that he was in her power as much as she was in his ; but the moody and temperate scruples thus suggested to her were restrained by the recollection that neither party could injure the other without drawing down disgrace and misery, aggravated perhaps by all the evils of poverty, upon her darling Benjamin.

Upon Lomax himself, who was equally attached to both his children, while he trembled at the thought of exposure, and the loss of the luxuries to which he was devoted, this consideration operated with an influence so potent,

every gesture may be traced a consciousness of his new importance ; he carries himself erect, plants his foot upon the ground with a firm step, and looks down upon those to whom he formerly looked up, either with an impertinent air of condescension, or with that arrogant assumption, which nothing but the pride of purse can engender, and none but an ignoble spirit can display. In his sanguine moods, for even the timid Lomax was occasionally confident and overweening, he would exhibit both these varieties of deportment ; but a single marked or scrutinizing glance from a passenger, an unexpected allusion to arrivals from South America, and, above all, the approach of any tall thin man in a low-crowned hat, for with this spectre his mind was ever haunted, would instantly humble his pride, and fill him with terrors, which as quickly manifested themselves in his averted and downcast eyes, his crouching shoulders, as if he would shrink within him-

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self, and the accelerated step with which he skulked away from the object of his alarm.

Among the eccentric habits generated by the morbid state of his mind, it was his frequent custom, whatever might be the weather, to take a boat in the afternoon, disembark in Thames Street, and walk to the Bank, which he would perambulate round and round, for one or two hours, muttering to himself the amount of the different stocks that stood in his name. It was a solace to his feelings thus to find himself, as it were, in the immediate presence of his wealth, to know that he might instantly sell or convert his funds, and flee, at a moment's warning, to the extremity of the earth, should any sudden emergency necessitate such a step. In the triumph of this fancied security, he would congratulate himself that, if his wealth had brought with it anxiety and self-reproach, it at least supplied him with wings which would presently speed him beyond the reach of a pursuer, and

ensure him, beneath a foreign sky, a continuance of his present gratifications. Even the chink of the guineas, as his fingers nervously twitched them up and down in his pocket, and the rattling of the large seals appended to his watch-chain, fell gratefully upon his ear, for they wafted to it a golden sound, and he eagerly welcomed the most trifling circumstance that reminded him of his altered fortunes, and gave him an additional assurance of his opulence.

For the same reason, the deferential air of the brokers, with some of whom he had made acquaintance, and who were all eager to court the favour of a large stockholder, filled him with a singular complacency, which was legible in his more composed countenance and gait, until some inexplicable change of mood, prompted by the vagaries of a diseased mind, occasioned him to start from his round, with hurried steps and an evident perturbation of spirit.

As even an unknown individual of singular

appearance, regularly frequenting any peculiar locality in so populous a city as London, soon wears himself a place in the public memory, it is not improbable that many of the citizens now existing may recall the gaunt and slouching figure of Lomax, as he prowled along Bartholomew Lane and Lothbury, chinking the gold in his pocket, and mumbling to himself; the sides of his large looped hat sometimes filled with the pouring rain, while he carried an unfurled umbrella under his arm, and his circumambulations continued with a sort of unconscious doggedness, until some occurrence woke him from his reverie, when he would plunge into the crowd of Cornhill or the Poultry, and disappear.

Time, the great equaliser, which is constantly employed in converting joy into satiety, and sorrow into resignation, is not without its occasional effect in calming the terrors of the guilty, so far as the responsibilities of this world are concerned. Continued impunity na-

turally inspires confidence, and even the timid mind that has long been familiar with danger at last learns to regard it with comparative indifference. Of this Lomax afforded an example, unless when any special alarm by day, or the uncheckable phantasms of sleep, gave new excitement to his fears. Having taken it for granted that Dr. H—— of Bristol would write to Edward Ruddock on the death of Hoffman, he had calculated the time when an answer might be expected from South America, or when the rightful heir might himself arrive to contest the will, and institute proceedings for the recovery of his property, and the punishment of its usurper.

Several months had now elapsed beyond the period of this anticipated contingency; there had been more than sufficient time for a second or a third communication, and yet no challenger appeared, nor was he served with any legal process or notice that intimated an in-

tention of disputing the validity of the will. Encouraged by this silence, his hopes gradually predominated over his fears, and periods intervened, during which his mind recovered a portion of its lost serenity. His wife, who gladly remarked the change, sought to confirm it by communicating to him some of her own confidence and fortitude, an object in which she could only partially succeed.

So far, however, was her purpose attained, that, during three or four months, he ceased to worry her either by his unconscious soliloquies, or his pusillanimous reproaches; she forbore, in consequence, to recriminate or upbraid; and both found such an incalculable addition to their comfort from this temporary restraint, that they made a mutual compact for its continuance, flattering themselves that their differences as well as their dangers were over, and that they should thenceforward be enabled to enjoy their good fortune, without any recur-

rence of their recent bickerings and miseries.

Alas! there may be a respite, but, without repentance and atonement, there is no redemption from the consequences of crime: there may be a truce, but there is no permanent cordiality, between its accomplices. An occurrence which could not have been anticipated, and against the effects of which it was impossible to guard, because it suspended over his head an indefinite and invisible danger, restored with tenfold force all the terrors of Lomax, shattered his mind into a pitiable state of agony, revived his bitter reproaches of his wife, irritated her beyond endurance, and converted their temporary reconciliation into an exacerbad hostility.

Some difference of opinion having arisen as to the precise wording of the will, which was still ever uppermost in their thoughts and conversation, it was proposed to refer to it; when it appeared that Lomax, on depositing the

original in Doctors' Commons, had omitted to retain a copy. For this oversight his wife gently rebuked him, pointing out the importance of always keeping a duplicate in the house for the sake of reference; and the husband, who was nervously sensitive upon this subject, ordered his carriage to be ready at an early hour of the following morning, that he might repair his error.

Hardly had the clerks taken their respective stations at the Will Office, and commenced the labours of the day by lounging over the newspapers, when the impatient Lomax, who had provided himself with pen and paper for the purpose, proceeded to the proper division, paid the customary fee, and requested permission to see the will of Diedrich Hoffman, mentioning the date of his death.

"Of Diedrich Hoffman?" said the clerk; "why, I took down that will only yesterday for a gentleman who wanted to copy it. I re-

member it because it was such a queer name he asked for."

"Hey, how, what!" exclaimed Lomax, with breathless agitation. "Yesterday! a gentleman? — copy? What — what — what sort of a person was he? Do you know—know him?"

"Not I; we never ask people's names, but I recollect his figure perfectly: he was a tall thin man, in a low-crowned hat."

"Lord have mercy upon me!" ejaculated Lomax in a hollow voice, as he clung for support to the desk, and then sunk into a chair.

"What is the matter?" demanded the surprised clerk; "are you not well, sir?"

No answer was returned for a minute or two; but the conscience-stricken criminal, aware that his perturbation might excite suspicion, made at length an effort to recover himself, and stammered out:—"I have been a great invalid—the heat over—over—overcame me; I shall be better presently."

“ You had better sit quiet for a little while,” replied the clerk, “ and the cool air of the office will presently revive you. This is the will, sir—Diedrich Hoffman of Bristol—queer name — a foreigner, I suppose.”

So saying, he resumed his perusal of the newspaper, and Lomax, left to himself, endeavoured to rally his prostrate faculties.

Vain was the attempt. His senses were bewildered ; every thing swam before his dizzy eyes ; not a single word of the writing could he decipher ; a confusion of hollow sounds rang in his ears, and his agitated hand occasioned such a rustling of the paper, which he almost unconsciously grasped, that it must have excited the attention of the clerk, had not his thoughts been preoccupied by the perusal of the news.

In vain did he argue with himself that there might be no real ground for his apprehensions, and that to betray his alarm might realize the

danger which at present was only conjectural. His functions refused their office ; and, after several unavailing attempts to peruse the document, he assumed a forced composure, returned it to the clerk, and with tottering knees walked slowly out of the room, stealing terrified glances on either side, in the fear that every individual whom he passed might rush from his seat to seize and detain him.

Feeling, as he crossed the threshold of the door, as if he had escaped from some great and imminent danger, he breathed more freely ; the pulsations of his heart were less painfully vehement ; the air, which blew freshly, helped to revive him ; and he leaped into his carriage with the alacrity of a flying felon who has reached a sanctuary, still, however, hastily drawing up the glasses, and shrinking into corner, in his anxiety to avoid observation.

As the vehicle was driven rapidly away, his terrors gradually diminished, and he was eve

beginning to reproach himself for his cowardice, when the carriage suddenly stopped, and he heard the voice of his coachman in altercation with strangers in the street.

“ I am discovered—I am arrested — God be merciful to me !” again muttered the wretched Lomax, shutting his eyes that he might not see the danger, and snatching up his feet in an agony of terror.

The door, however, was not opened; and, as the voices of the disputants became louder, he was at length enabled to ascertain, with an unspeakable relief of mind, that they were merely quarrelling about a stoppage in the street, a dispute which ended by his coachman turning the carriage round, that he might make his way into Ludgate Hill through Bridge Street.

In the complacency of returning self-possession, the still trembling Lomax, who could not help reproaching himself with the ridiculous alarm which had almost seared his senses, re-

solved that his future cheer of mind should not be disturbed by such ridiculous apprehensions.

Doubtless there was something appalling in the intelligence he had gathered at Doctors' Commons ; and he was fully persuaded that the figure he had seen peering through the kitchen-window, when he committed the original will to the flames, was the same mysterious individual who had procured, only on the previous day, a copy of the forged document. This was a startling conviction. The man, whoever he might be, was living, and in London he might be walking beside the carriage at that very moment, a fact of which the bare possibility suddenly chasing away his newly-born courage, made him huddle himself still more closely in the corner.

But, on the other hand, he reflected that he could only have required a copy of the will for the purpose of instituting legal proceedings,

tedious process, of which the previous notice that must be given would allow him abundant time to sell out his funds, and to embark with his family on board some American or other neutral vessel, for a foreign land, where he should be beyond the reach of danger.

It was possible, moreover, that a copy of the document might have been taken without any hostile intention, or, that if such were even entertained, it might be abandoned from an inability to obtain proof in invalidation of the registered and authenticated deed. Who could challenge it? What eyes but his own and his wife's beheld its forgery? Was it not duly signed in the presence of several living witnesses, whose signatures avouched its genuineness? To these interrogatories his returning confidence gave such satisfactory replies, that he drew himself up with a defying toss of the head, and ejaculated a contemptuous "Ha! ha!" in scorn of his own pusillanimous misgivings.

The carriage, which for some time had been proceeding at a very slow rate, now stopped; and Lomax, whose ear was exceedingly sensitive, caught the buzz and murmur of numerous voices, implying the presence of some unusual crowd. Dastardly as he was, his recent cogitations had invigorated him with so much momentary fortitude, that he raised the blind and lowered the window, in order to ascertain the cause of the stoppage, and of the many-tongued sounds that filled the air, when a scene was suddenly presented to his eyes of which his bewildered apprehensions could not for a moment determine the precise nature.

Before him extended a street of considerable length and width, entirely filled with a dense and stationary mass of people, while others crowded the windows, balconies, and even some of the house-tops, all gazing intently towards the further extremity, where, in front of

a massive and stern-looking edifice of stone, a figure wearing the semblance of a well-dressed man, save that a cotton cap enveloped the head, swung by a rope from a wooden framework.

A moment's recollection convinced him that he was gazing up the Old Bailey upon some guilty wretch suffering the last sentence of the law, in front of Newgate. A scene somewhat similar to that now actually presented to him had been so often conjured up in his dreams, wherein he himself figured as the hangman's victim, that he had no sooner recognized the nature of the exhibition than his blood ran cold, a sickness came over him, and he recoiled from its contemplation with an involuntary nodder, impatiently awaiting the moment when the advance of the carriage should withdraw him from a spectacle fraught with such appalling associations.

No progress, however, was made ; and at this

juncture two men, standing close by the open window of the vehicle, recognized and saluted each other, when one of them inquired:—  
“What is the offence for which this unhappy man is suffering, that his execution draws together such an unusual assemblage of people?”

“He is, or rather was, a gentleman by birth and station,” replied the party thus addressed, “which may in some degree explain the extraordinary interest excited by his fate; and he is hung for forging a will, by which he obtained, and enjoyed for several years, a considerable property.”

“Such rascals deserve the gallows,” resumed the first speaker, “for they may be said to rob and defraud the dead, as well as the living. I doubt whether you are quite correct, though, in saying that he *enjoyed* his plunder during several years, for there cannot, I suspect, be much enjoyment of any thing when a man

knows that he has always got a halter around his neck."

"Right, right! and a halter, too, which, sooner or later, is sure to throttle him, for this sort of villany seldom escapes ultimate discovery, and it is one that is never pardoned."

Of Lomax's feelings, during this brief but harrowing conversation, language is inadequate to give a description. Afraid to move his arm and draw down the blind or raise the window, lest he should excite observation, he remained nailed to the corner of the carriage, compelled to listen to further comments of the same nature, every word of which pierced his ear like the blade of a sharp knife, and tortured him with the most excruciating mental anguish.

A clamour of voices and a confusion among the mob, arising from the seizure of a pick-pocket, occasioned him once more to look out

upon the scene, when his starting eyes encountered an object which made his whole frame thrill with an aggravated horror. Exalted upon the steps of the corner house opposite, and transfixing him with a stern and piercing stare, he beheld a tall thin man in a low-crowned hat—the man—the identical figure, which had disappeared so mysteriously from the kitchen area—the same, doubtless, who had so recently procured a copy of the will, and was now, perchance, marking the victim who might shortly collect another crowd upon the same spot, by dangling from a gibbet like the malefactor upon whom they were now gazing.

The stranger's terrible eyes seemed to possess the fabled fascination of the basilisk; for Lomax, withering as he found their glare, was utterly unable to withdraw his own, or even to move a muscle of his body; and thus he remained, for two or three minutes, rigid with horror, until by a convulsive effort, he dashed down th

blind, uttering at the same time a shuddering groan ; immediately after which, overcome by contending emotions, he fell backwards in a fit.

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That I have run, and still pursue, these ways,  
That hale down curses on me?"

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# JANE LOMAX.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ Oh, proper stuff !  
This is the very coinage of your brain ;  
This is the air-drawn dagger that you said  
Led you to Duncan.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the unfortunate Lomax recovered his senses, he found himself lying at the bottom of the carriage, unable, in the bewilderment of the moment, to account for his situation, or for the great exhaustion of his powers. As the occurrences of the morning slowly and sadly

returned to his recollection, he raised himself not without difficulty, upon the seat, and, upstealing a glance at the houses, ascertained that he was not far from his own dwelling.

Lassitude having now succeeded to terror, he no longer shook all over, but a cold perspiration bathed his features; he felt totally unnerved and his efforts to rally his energies, that he might not excite the suspicion of the servants when he alighted at his own door, were only partially successful, for his disordered dress and his aghast looks, of which he was unconscious, sufficiently revealed to them that something had powerfully disturbed the master.

Upon his entering the parlour, and beholding the partner of his guilt — for he did not at first perceive his children — his assumed composure suddenly deserted him. Groaning aloud as he sunk into a chair, he murmured, in a hollow voice, “I have seen him! — we are

discovered—it is all over—he pursues us—we must fly—we must fly instantly ! ”

“ Mary — Benjamin,” said the mother, whose presence of mind never deserted her, “ leave us alone for the present — retire from the room ; your father is not well—he knows not what he says—this hot weather often overcomes him.”

The calm tone in which these words had been pronounced was changed for one of unmeasured and bitter contempt, when, upon their having quitted the apartment, she exclaimed to her husband —“ Idiot and dastard ! are you drunk or mad, that you thus compromise us both with our children ? *We* are discovered—*we* must fly instantly ! Speak for yourself, and sink by yourself, if your own mouth is to be the leak through which your secret is to escape, and the engulfing waters are to be let in. What fresh hobgoblin have you encountered ? what new raw-head-and-bloody-

"How is *that* you seen, or imagined, that you were alone in this scarecrow plight, and with such long-drag looks?"

"*How* — I have seen him! — seen him with my own eyes."

"*Waking* or asleep? is it a nightmare of the light or of the darkness? and who is the nameless being that has thus shattered your mind and body?"

"The terrible one! — the unknown! — the secret witness of our death-involving deed!"

"Ha! ha! ha! I guessed as much — the shadow of an apparition — the likeness of a nonentity. For shame! for shame! how can you suffer yourself to be thus cowed by an illusion?"

"Jane, Jane! this is no dream or vision — no suggestion of my fear or fancy, nor was it ever such. I *did* see the man peering at us from the area window — it is the same whom I beheld to-day. Oh! how terrible and search-

ing is his eye ! If you believe not me, will you doubt the averment of others ? Our enemy has commenced operations—we are lost—we must fly !”

Lomax now succinctly related, not without several starts of terror when he heard the least noise, or a ring at the bell, the statement of the clerk at Doctors’ Commons, the scene of the execution, and the manner in which he had been transfixed by the appalling stare of the stranger.

“There may be five thousand men in London who answer to this description,” said the wife. “In spite of your reiterated asseverations, I persist in affirming that the supposed man in the area was the mere phantom of your fear, and, consequently, that his imaginary apparition at the corner of the Old Bailey was no more formidable, notwithstanding his saucer eyes, than any other individual in the crowd. As to the execution, we know beforehand that

the forgery of a will is a capital offence, which is never pardoned, the ocular demonstration of which fact should only warn you against these wild and haggard looks, and these self-betraying exclamations, lest you yourself should dangle in a cotton cap, like the wretch upon whom you have just been gazing."

"Horrible!" ejaculated the husband, with a shudder; "my flesh creeps at the very thought. How can you allude to such a frightful event with so much apparent levity?"

"Self-possession is not levity, and why should I share your abject trembling? In nothing that has occurred do I perceive the smallest ground for apprehension."

"Amazing! I had almost said incredible! Will you deny that a stranger, answering to the description I have given, has been taking a copy of the will?"

"No; but I care not a rush whether he be tall or short, old or young, in a low or high-

crowned hat. He may have been employed by some of Hoffman's German relations, without any hostile intentions; and, whatever be his object, the law's delay will allow us abundant time to escape, if we are driven to that extremity, which I do not at all anticipate. To confront and defy danger is to conquer it; to fear and to forestall is to invite it; and I see ten times more peril in your terrified visage and tell-tale tongue, than in all the machinations of your tall, thin, hurlothrumbo in the low-crowned hat."

"How true," exclaimed Lomax, with a sigh, "was the observation of the man standing by the carriage-window, when he said that the guilty never enjoy their unlawful gains! For this I can vouch by my own wretched experience. May Heaven falsify his friend's prediction that the forgers of wills never escape discovery and punishment. 'The halter they constantly wear about their neck seldom fails

to throttle them in the end.' These were his words, and methinks I already feel a strangling sensation in the throat."

"Ay, you will think any thing but sense, and feel every thing but courage. Verily, you are the most chicken-hearted of men, or rather of irrational creatures. A schoolboy would be ashamed of such weakness."

Mrs. Lomax's supreme contempt for her husband, and her anger at his self-accusations and perilous betrayal of alarm before Benjamin and Mary, blinded her to the fact that at the present moment he stood too much in awe of a greater danger to be afraid either of her scorn, her ridicule, or her indignant upbraidings.

His very terrors giving him courage to retaliate her sarcasms, and even to retort her threats, an altercation ensued of a more fierce and menacing character than any by which their passions had been hitherto inflamed.

Lomax, more positive than ever, of the reality of the man whom he had seen in the kitchen area, and convinced of his identity with the individual by whose basilisk eyes he had that morning been transfixed, was eager to make arrangements for the conversion of their property into money, and their instant flight.

At the instigation of the wife, the stock had been invested in their joint names, so that neither could sell without the acquiescence and signature of the other, and she now positively refused to comply with the wishes of her husband. From a feminine love of domination, or, perhaps, from the natural ascendancy which a strong mind feels itself entitled to assume over a weak one, she wished everything to emanate from herself. "Leave all to me," was her reply to his reiterated entreaties that she would not endanger the whole family by a misplaced confidence, which deserved no other name than that of temerity,

if it might not rather be designated a judicial blindness. "When the peril approaches, or is even distinctly visible," she continued, "I will either defeat or escape from it. Danger exalts my courage as much as it depresses your's : I know not how I could place my own bravery in a more conspicuous light. Attempt not to act independently of me ; no separate interest must weaken our mutual liability ; nothing can divide us ; in every thing we must hang together."

"Hang !" ejaculated Lomax, with a recoiling start.

"Blockhead and poltroon ! I meant not literally ; but your convict looks seem to anticipate my averment. Be it so : I repeat to you that we must act together, and live together, or ———*die* together !"

Lomax, now becoming ten times more wretched than ever, took more frequent refuge from his misery in the temporary oblivion produced by

intoxication; and the conjugal truce which had suspended for a while the mutual bickerings of this unhappy pair, now broken, irreparably and for ever, was succeeded by an alienation only the more bitter and absolute because they were compelled to live together beneath the same roof, and to maintain a hollow show of courtesy towards each other.

Mrs. Lomax had truly declared that her courage invariably rose with the necessity for its display; but her fortitude was not proof against the incessant gnawings of a guilty conscience, nor could she withstand the perpetual wear and tear of her husband's indiscretion and imbecility, which suspended the sword of Damocles over her head, and fretted a spirit which scarcely any thing could frighten.

In the morning, his obscure and muttering soliloquies assumed a still more perilous character than heretofore; his evening wanderings, not seldom aggravated by intemperance, were

sufficient to excite suspicion, even when they did not threaten some fatal divulgement; and to the hideous phantasms of the night had now been superadded a fearful habit of somnambulency, fraught with all sorts of terrors and dangers.

To nullify, if possible, the effect of these infirmities, Mrs. Lomax did not scruple to inform her friends that her husband's mind, never very strong, had been so much affected by his good fortune as to be liable to occasional aberrations, a result which, as she truly stated, was by no means rare under similar circumstances.

By this fiction, which was soon whispered about in the neighbourhood, suspicion was lulled, and all his oddities were attributed to a partial disorder of his faculties. To some of the inmates of the house, however, who had closer and more frequent opportunities of observation, this pretext did not prove altogether satisfactory. In secret conclave, the servants would hint to

each other their suspicions that all was not right, and that their master's disquietude might proceed from a guilty conscience.

Benjamin, who was by nature candid, confiding, and unsuspicious, attributed his father's change of demeanour, and evident perturbation of spirits, to the cause assigned by his mother ; under which persuasion he sought to alleviate his calamity by all the good offices which his affectionate and dutiful heart could suggest.

So did Mary, whose superior penetration, however, would not allow her to be so easily hoodwinked. The undefined misgivings with which she was almost afraid to trust her own heart, revealed themselves in the additional dejection of her air, and the unconscious tear that would occasionally steal down her cheek. Her quick-sighted mother, reading her thoughts with the intuitive apprehensiveness of guilt, resented her silent sorrow as an implied reproach, and even became jealous of her atten-

tions to her father. Her darling Benjamin had always engrossed the whole of her parental affections, and, as we are generally averse from those whom we have injured, she sometimes conducted herself towards Mary with a coldness that evinced an almost total indifference, though it had not yet amounted to positive dislike. Under the joint influence, however, of a soured temper and a saddened heart, aggravated by the jealousy to which we have just alluded, she began to treat her now with a harshness which the poor girl was utterly unable to explain, and which she felt the more sensibly, because she knew it to be utterly unmerited.

Mary, whose mind was scarcely less vigorous though much better regulated than that of her mother, was not of a temperament to be permanently depressed by this manifest injustice. If the sense of what was due to her parent would not allow her to resent, or even to com-

**plain** of it, the feeling of what was due to **herself** prevented her from succumbing beneath it.

**Discharging** all her duties with the same **assiduous** punctuality as ever, her heart sought **relief** from the squabbles of her alienated parents and the splendid misery of Cypress House in the society of such congenial minds as the now **extended** circle of her acquaintance afforded her. Among these, her affections settled more **especially** upon Helen Owen and Rose Mayhew, the predilection which she had conceived for the former in their first interview quickly ripening into intimacy and unreserved friendship ; while she fully appreciated the talents and the genius of Rose, though she could not so fully sympathize with her romantic turn, and almost morbid sensibility.

If these friends delighted her by their kindred tastes and qualities, others intruded themselves upon her acquaintance who amused

her by the total uncongeniality of their character.

Foremost in this list stood Mr. Jasper Pike, a spruce-looking, dapper bachelor, at least forty years of age, the neatness of whose carefully preserved habiliments, in conjunction with a certain briskness of walk and manner, showed that he still considered himself to merit his *çi-devant* title of a smart young man, although his half-bald head and dried aspect did not fully support his claims. His small grey eyes indicated cunning not unmingled with suspicion, his sharp nose betokened a correspondent keenness, and his thin compressed lips an answerable closeness of disposition ; and yet he could not be pronounced ill-looking. An habitual smirk gave animation to his countenance, his teeth were fine, and he wore the look of a man who seemed to be upon friendly terms both with himself and the world. For the latter he had tolerably good reason, as, without the fa-

tigues and anxieties of any regular business, he had contrived to improve an insignificant patrimony into a comfortable independence by watching the different markets, and speculating in stocks or merchandize, whenever a favourable opportunity occurred. Compared with his narrow inexpensive mode of living, he might be pronounced rich ; judged by his penurious habits, and close calculation in the minutest trifles, he would be deemed a pauper ; though, in the midst of all this uneasy parsimony, he failed not, at times, to make a boast of his easy circumstances.

“ As I have been the means of introducing you to the acquaintance of Mr. Jasper Pike,” said Helen Owen, one morning to her new friend, “ and as I have gained some insight into his character, both from personal observation, and the hints of my uncle Bryant, who has known him for many years, I think it right for your good guidance, seeing that the crea-

there is a bachelor, apparently looking out for a moneyed wife, to give you the result of my experience. But, before I do so, tell me with your usual frankness what is your own impression of him ? ”

“ That is rather a delicate question,” said Mary, hesitatingly : “ the gentleman is a friend—may, I have been told an admirer—of your’s.”

“ An admirer of my purse he may be, but, as to my person, I believe that he views it, as he does our whole sex, with supreme indifference. Dr. Johnson has flippantly and falsely asserted that any woman would marry Jonathan Wild rather than Saint Austin, if he had three pence more. Now, in this respect, Mr. Pike resembles the doctor’s fabled female. If he believes that you have a hundred pounds more than I have, I shall be instantly eclipsed, and you will become the goddess of his idolatry, until he can find a richer divinity to whom he may offer his venal homage. Mr. Jasper Pike,

in short, is one of a class solely to be found in that province covered with houses which we denominate London, in the midst of whose dense and almost countless population a man may live in so perfect a solitude, so totally free from all observation, even of his nearest neighbours, so completely independent of the influences and responsibilities of public or private opinion, that, the social and moral qualities never being called upon to develop themselves, die away, and the innate selfishness of his heart may be fostered with full impunity, safe from all reproach or detection."

"Unless he should be exposed to the scrutiny of so keen an observer as yourself."

— "Ay, ay, you and I are exceptions to the dull crowd, who, like owls, are purblind in the light. In the country, a man cannot, as in London, hide himself among a million and a half of his fellow-creatures, and become a deserter from the performance of his duties.

The eyes of his neighbours are upon him; he is amenable to public opinion; he is, moreover, registered and enrolled in the parish books; he must share all the liabilities of his station and his fortune; he must discharge his obligations, whether public or domestic, whether municipal, parochial, or social. In the metropolis, almost every thing of this sort may be evaded, if a man be mean and sordid enough to make the attempt. A guinea subscription to a district or a mendicity society acquits the London selfist of all claims on the score of charity; and, as to any other demands, upon his time, his purse, or his talents, he carefully withdraws from them, not scrupling to employ the most paltry shifts and subterfuges for the accomplishment of his object."

"Your description of this class does not give me a very elevated opinion of Mr. Pike."

"It will not be raised when I add that he

belongs to a subdivison still less amiable in its characters. Many of the selfish beings I have ~~been~~ portraying 'assume a virtue if they have it not,' and are so far ashamed of this egotism as to conceal it. But Mr. Pike boasts of his total indifference to all interests but his own; he would take every advantage of the world, and reciprocate none; he would grasp all he can get, and give nothing in return, and this he holds to be an irrefragable proof of superior shrewdness and sagacity."

"Meaning craft and dishonesty," said Mary, "for I deem such utter selfishness little better than negative swindling."

"True, but it is legal, and this is his defence. 'I offend no law,' he exclaims; 'nay, I act in conformity to the great primary rule that self-preservation is the first law of nature, for I do but practice my finesses against those who are seeking to take advantage of me in some way or other. It is a man's paramount

duty to preserve his property, his time, and his occupations, for his own comfort and advantage.' Mr. Pike is bold, in short, in avowing his total want of all social principle, while in every thing else his cowering selfishness and his fear of incurring any sort of responsibility or personal danger render him as timid as a hare."

"But what says he to the obligations imposed upon us by the moral law? What says he to the injunctions of religion that we should love our neighbour as ourselves?"

"Why, he confines it to spinsters who have property of their own. He affects to love me for instance, and he will love you still more tenderly when he has ascertained that you are richer. He measures every thing by —"

The conclusion of her speech was prevented by the entrance of the servant to announce Mr. Pike.

"What is said of Old Nick," whispered

## CHAPTER II.

" And he is oft the wisest man,  
Who is not wise at all."

WORDSWORTH.

" AHA, ladies !" exclaimed the visiter, as he jerked into the room, springing upon his toes, and affecting a youthful jauntiness ; " do I find you together ? this is, indeed, lucky ; it is killing two birds with one stone, for I intended to have done myself the pleasure of calling at Cypress House, and shall be happy to *beau* Miss Lomax, if she is wending homeward. You see, young ladies, I am not struck silent, like Captain Macheath, when he encountered two beauties at once :

' How happy could I be with either,  
Were t'other dear charmer away,  
But, while you thus plague me together,  
To neither a word will I say—  
But Tol-de-rol — lol-de-rol-lol.' "

Mr. Pike sang this verse with an affected *nonchalance*, though in reality he exerted the *best* powers of a voice which had never been *good*, and had now become as thin and dry as himself.

“We feel infinitely flattered,” said Mary, “by your informing us that we plague you, as well as by your comparing us to the damsels in the Beggars’ Opera, both of whom, if I mistake not, were admirers of the gallant captain.”

“Nay, now, this is unkind, Miss Lomax ; this is wounding me in the tenderest point, for, if there is any thing upon which I pique myself, it is upon my profound respect for the fair sex.”

“I think we must forgive him,” cried Helen ; “it is quite natural that he should mistake himself for Captain Macheath, and the rest is, therefore, excusable.”

“So far, indeed, I may be said to resemble

him that I have always been a man for the ladies."

"How, then, are we to account for you still being a bachelor, unless we are to presume that you have never been a lady's man asked Helen.

"Really, now, you are more severe than your friend. It becomes me not to boast, but a person like me, well known to be in independent circumstances, need not long wear the willow, unless by his own choice. I am no advocate for *very* early marriages; perhaps, too, I am difficult to please; but, when I find a suitable partner in every respect, and one, moreover, who unites beauty with virtue, I should desire nothing better than to strike my bachelor flag, and surrender at discretion."

At the conclusion of this speech, he fixed his eyes upon Mary, with a significant smile.

"Ah!" thought Helen, as she smiled at her friend, "*my* chance is lost; he has weighed

us both in his money scales, and I am found wanting in the balance."

This lucky guess was a literal truth, for he had ascertained, through the means of a clerk in the Bank, the exact amount of stock standing in the name of Joel Lomax and his wife, the result of which knowledge was a determination to cultivate their acquaintance, with an ultimate view to the chances of becoming their son-in-law ; and to renounce the hopes he had secretly formed of securing Helen Owen and her fortune, through his intimacy with her uncle.

"It is some distance to Cypress House," said Mary ; "and, as I presume, from Mr. Pike having brought his umbrella, that he anticipates rain, I must not delay my return."

"I can assure you, Miss," smirked the bachelor, "that there is no present appearance of rain ; but, as I never trust the weather out of my sight, I always carry an umbrella,

and invariably bring it up stairs with me, for I lost an old one some years ago, by leaving it in a gentleman's hall. In trifles of this sort, people are so selfish, I might say so dishonest! An umbrella is a wonderful preserver of clothes. Mine, you will observe, has a cane-stick for the handle; I am amazed how you ladies can carry parasols with metal rods, which must be exceedingly dangerous in a thunder-storm, and I am sure, to judge by the present company, that you do not require any additional attraction to draw the sparks about you. He! he! he!"

He again smirked at Mary, as if to intimate that, although his compliment included both, it was only meant for one.

"An umbrella," continued the calculating Pike, "soon saves its cost in saving coach-hire. I scarcely ever get into a hackney-coach for my chambers are in a central situation, and I am a famous walker."

"I cannot help fancying that a residence in chambers must be very lonesome and dull," observed Mary.

"True, Miss Lomax, very true, but look at the cheapness and the other advantages. I reside, for instance, in one of the inns of court, which is extra-parochial, so that I have no parish taxes to pay or duties to perform. Then, I am not a housekeeper, so that I may dine out all the year round, and cannot be called upon to give a single dinner in return. Besides, I am thus happily incapacitated for a thousand troublesome offices, which I might be called upon to perform, either for the public, or for my friends. I can neither be bail, nor juryman, nor drawn for the militia. I have always made it a rule to decline being trustee, or executor, or witness of any kind, scrupulously avoiding all liabilities or responsibilities, that might involve me in the smallest trouble ; a line of conduct which has not only kept me

out of hot water, but has made me independent of the whole world."

"But, still, there are certain taxes which you cannot avoid."

"Not many, not many," cried Pike, with knowing nod and a wink of his eye. "Much may be done by a little management. It happens that as the collector always leaves his notices for the income-tax at the same time in the year, he invariably finds my chambers shut up, the letter-box closed, and a little paper stuck over it, with the words, 'Gone away—' When the rogue has completed his round I return to my rooms, and am ready to give him the slip next year in the same way. Leg bail, you see, Miss Lomax, is the only bail I am competent to give, not being a householder. He! he!"

"But, is this honest?" inquired Mary, with a look expressive of contempt.

"Honest! to be sure it is, and lawful, too."

surely, I may go out of town what time I please, and return when I please. I tell no untruth. I *am* gone away for the time. It is not my business to be running after tax-gatherers. Every man for himself, and God for us all; that's my motto. You see, we single fellows lead a merry life: I owe no man a shilling, and am well tiled in, as the phrase goes; and yet, as I before said, I am, and always have been, devoted to the fair sex, and can have no earthly objection to settle down as a married man, when I meet with such a partner as I have a right to expect, and one whose fortune is equal to my own."

Here he ogled Mary in a manner that was meant to be tender, though it was merely vulgar and impertinent, for the bachelor could not get rid of an unfortunate self-sufficiency of manner, that rendered him often most offensive when he meant to be most ingratiating. "Out of the question of marriage," he continued,

turning to Helen, "I make no distinctions and am proud to call myself the most devoted humble servant of the ladies in general."

"On the part of whom," said Helen, placing her hands before her, and making him a burlesque curtsy,—“I beg to inform you that appreciate your homage *as it deserves.*”

Mary now rose to take her departure, accompanied by Helen, who had agreed to spend the afternoon at Cypress House; and, as Mr. Pike offered his services to *beau* them, (such was his usual phrase) they accepted his escort, though his officious politeness, or rather his selfish timidity and over-carefulness, rendered him a troublesome companion.

“Cross the street, ladies, if you please: quick, quick!” was one of his first exclamations; “do you not observe that the old houses on this side are badly roofed? the wind is blowing strong, and it would not be so pleasant to have a tile upon one’s head. It is astonishing

though, how often one may get into trouble by anxiety to avoid it! Once, just as I had adopted the precaution we have now been using, a tile which, if I had remained where I was, would have passed me without injury, was blown quite across the street, and wounded me so severely in the leg, that I was laid up for a month. On another occasion, in my hurry to avoid the splashing of a hackney-coach—those drivers never think of one's clothes—I fell down an area, bruised myself severely, upset a bucket of hog-wash, and completely spoil a new pair of pantaloons.”

At this catalogue of calamities, the last of which was uttered with a most feeling emphasis, Helen laughed outright, asking her companion whether it might not be sometimes better for Mr. Pike to trust to fate and chance, than to depend upon his own clever management, which, like a will-o'-the-wisp, seemed to be always leading him into scrapes and quagmires.

“ No,” was the reply ; “ since I do every thing by calculation, I have, at all events, the satisfaction of knowing that I act upon a right system.”

“ That may be questioned when the intended self-preservation so often turns out to be self-injury. Long-sighted people, who are perpetually peering out for distant dangers, are very apt to overlook those that are immediately beneath their nose, like the old philosopher who fell into a pond while he was gazing at the moon, and might have seen the moon in the pond if he would only have looked straight before him.”

To this observation Pike made no reply— for, having perceived that the dust was blowing rather detrimentally upon his coat, he quitted his outside position, and placed himself between his companions, declaring that he never felt himself so proud as when he had a lady upon each arm. Scarcely had he

achieved this polite and gallant act, when he trod upon a loose stone, which, liberally besprinkling him with dirty water, drew from him the remark that he certainly was the most unfortunate person in the world, since the more he attempted to avoid accidents and annoyances, the more sure he was to encounter others of a worse description.

"May we not then reasonably conclude," asked Helen, with a smile, "that the ill-fated fish which jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire was a Pike?"

"There can be no doubt he was one of my ancestors, whose propensity I have inherited," replied the bachelor, stopping the progress of the party while he carefully rubbed off each individual splash with his pocket-handkerchief.

"I am afraid we must now wish you good morning," said Mary, on their reaching the corner of the next street, "for we intend calling on Mrs. Skinner in our way home."

“ I shall be happy to accompany you,” was the bachelor’s reply ; “ for, though I am not particularly fond of over-strict people and saints, Skinner is a rich man, gives excellent dinners, and I shall be glad to pay him a visit, now that I am in this part of the world. It will save me coach or boat hire, on another day.”

Mrs. Skinner was a sour and sanctimonious gossip, whose original propensity to backbiting and slander was not only aggravated by ill-health and ill-temper, but by the discovery that her unregenerate neighbours, though not a tenth part so good and pious as herself, seemed to be ten times happier. To avoid, however, the imputation of being a scandal-monger, she had recourse to a disingenuous, though by no means uncommon, *finesse*, always pretending that the tales which had originated with herself had been communicated to her by others, whom she sharply rebuked for their

censorious tongues. By this artifice, she indulged her own love of calumny, while she obtained a reputation with many simple-witted people for superior candour and liberality.

“What a capital dining-room we passed!” exclaimed Pike, as they entered the house: “the table was set out for twelve, and I never saw one more handsomely appointed, with ice-pails, and all. I wonder whether Mr. Skinner is at home, perhaps he might ask me. I thought I smelt *real* turtle, and I know he sometimes gives it.”

“I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting,” cried Mrs. Skinner, as she hastened into the room, panting for breath and red with anger; “but those good-for-nothing children are the plague of my life. They are afforded every opportunity in the world of becoming pious, orderly, and obedient, and yet, the more pains I take, the worse they seem to be. I have a godly governess, an excellent young woman,

who is very strict, who is authorized to correct them as she thinks fit, and upon whom I am perpetually inculcating that, as they are born in sin and the children of wrath, she must break their spirits, and whip the devil out of them while they are young. I am sure I do not spoil them myself by sparing the rod. — Then they have such religious advantages : and yet little William flew at me and bit me just now, like a tiger-cat, merely because I was whipping him. I'll teach him to be passionate, a young tyrant ! ”

“ I have no doubt you will ! ” thought Helen, who was so fond of children, and so perfectly convinced that they might be still more effectually spoiled by over-severity than by over-indulgence, that she dared not trust herself with any reply to this unmaternal diatribe. Mary, who found the topic equally unpleasant, endeavoured to start some new one ; but the conversational powers of Mrs. Skinner were

so exceedingly limited in their range, that, wherever a subject might begin, it was sure to be presently twisted into the views, interests, and proceedings, of the little religious *coterie* to which she belonged.

As her auditors seemed to be but little conversant with some of these subjects, she contemplated them with that expression of demure and sour disdain which is almost peculiar to her class, until the name of Mrs. Hunter happened to be accidentally mentioned, when she gave a deep sigh, and exclaimed, with a look of commiseration : — “ Poor woman ! I fear she has worse troubles to encounter than any she has yet experienced. That profligate, abandoned son of her’s ! ”

“ I did not know that she had more than one,” exclaimed Helen. “ You cannot, surely, be speaking of Mr. Alfred Hunter ? ”

“ Indeed but I am, and, as you may almost be said to be living under the same roof, you

ought to know what the world says of him. I am only amazed that Mr. Bryant, who is a sensible person, and a man of the world, should retain him in his employment, especially when he has two young ladies, and one of them a reputed heiress, inmates in his house. You were aware, of course, that Mr. Hunter has been a notorious gambler, that he has ruined his mother, and even purloined his sister's portion, which has been the occasion, poor thing! of breaking off her marriage, and destroying her happiness for ever. *That*, I fear, there is no denying. I have been told, by those who ought to know, that he drinks and mingles with profligate society; for this charge, however, I trust there is no foundation; I am the last person to say any thing unhandsome; but I have been most confidently assured that he is a professed infidel, and never goes to any place of public worship, which is an offence that never can be forgiven either in this world or in

the next. Now, if these things are not true, it is really quite monstrous that people should invent such wicked and abominable accusations."

During the latter part of this speech, Helen's bosom had been heaving with indignation, and her eyes sparkled as she prepared to vindicate the party thus deeply accused. Her purpose was prevented by the return of Mr. Pike, who had quitted the room some time before to seek for Mr. Skinner, in the hope of obtaining an invitation to partake of the turtle, and who now re-appeared, declaring, with a disappointed look, that his search had been ineffectual. Deeming it possible, however, that he might accomplish his object with the lady, he drew out his watch, and exclaimed, with a well-acted surprise, "Heavens ! I had no idea it was so late ! I shall lose my dinner ! I had engaged to meet two or three friends at the Mitre. How very unlucky ! and

As the party was about to depart, a strange  
 and unexpected visitor betook in  
 the

Evening of the 10th of June, a few days forth a  
 week, the late Mrs. Loxley, wife of the house-  
 holder, arrived, and when he continued  
 and in the most satisfactory satisfaction, we  
 had the pleasure of the banquet in which a  
 number of guests were destined to participate.  
 The dinner was brought so well able  
 and in the most perfect manner of a  
 and the most delicious supper and smel-  
 ling, that the preparations were somewhat  
 and in the most perfect manner, however p  
 and in the most perfect manner for a dinner.

Robert and Mary now rose to take their depa-  
 ture, when Mrs. Skinner said she would accom-  
 pany them to Cypress House, as she had lo-  
 vided to have a little conversation with Mr  
 Loxley. Whatever may be their motives, as  
 we are far from denying that these may

Well meant even when most mistaken, the over-good folks of this class are generally distinguished by an insatiable mania for making converts, evincing considerable tact in selecting those junctures when their victims may be assailed with the greatest probability of success.

Not with a more unerring instinct does the vulture hie from afar towards his prostrate and defenceless prey — not with a more remorseless pertinacity does the gad-fly fix upon the sores and galled places of the animal he worries, than do these missionaries of misery swoop upon their intended proselytes, when their bodily strength is bowed down by sickness, or they are wounded in heart by sorrow and anxiety. Well do most of them know by their own experience that a wretched mind is the fittest recipient for a wretched bigotry, a morbid spirit the most likely to be infected with a diseased religion.

Mrs. Skinner had noticed for some time

past the secret inquietude and failing health of Mrs. Lemax, whom she had accordingly marked down as a subject for her spiritual machinations.

When the party was again en route for Cypress House, the bachelor, who was very pointed and officious in his attentions to Mary, would have possessed himself of her arm, but she evaded his purpose, attached herself to Helen, and left him to escort Mrs. Skinner, an arrangement by which he was by no means well pleased, having conceived an additional dislike for his companion since she had declined taking his hints about the dinner.

A few minutes after they had started, they were arrested by a sudden exclamation of "Stop! stop!" from Pike; when several people rushed hastily past them, and they perceived, at the other extremity of the street into which they had turned, a knot of men in blue jackets, vociferating angrily, and flourishing

**bludgeons** in the air, as if engaged in a **scuffle**.

“It seems to be a party of drunken sailors fighting together,” said Pike, as he ran into a little shop, and held the door in his hand, ready to close it. “You had better follow me, and take refuge here till the row is over.”

“There is hardly room for us all,” observed Helen.

“Hardly, indeed,” replied Pike, without offering to quit the situation he had secured ; “but there is another shop over the way, and I am sure nobody would be so ungallant as to refuse a place to the ladies.”

“You had better not huddle so close to the wall, sir,” said the shopwoman to Pike, “for we have just had it painted.”

“Well, I thought I smelt paint,” exclaimed the bachelor ; and, turning partially round, he beheld, with a horror which was instantly and vividly depicted on his countenance, that the

and the suit of his new blue coat were  
 contrasted with white. For the moment, the  
 theatrical spectacle actually deprived him of the  
 pleasure of perhaps he was disconcerted by the  
 sight of his young and fair companion  
 (Mr. Van Senter after laughed) found it in  
 vain to suppress.

"It is really very remarkable," at length  
 signed the old man, "that, whenever I exercise  
 my usual prudence or forethought, I am  
 sure to meet with some special misfortune."

"As you have succeeded in keeping your  
 suit in a wool jacket," smiled Helen, "you  
 may well submit to its being a painted one."

"Why, I must confess that I have a par-  
 ticular horror of a drunken sailor, for, in  
 running away from an approaching party of  
 them, I once fell over a dog and got sadly  
 bitten in the leg, an accident which I should  
 have avoided had I stood my ground, for the  
 fellows turned down another street. I hope

**the rogues whom we just saw scuffling together have done the same ; I hear no noise—all seems once more quiet.”**

**“Lauk, sir, these were a pressgang,” cried the shopwoman ; “and I fear, by their coming to blows, that some poor creature has been desperate enough to resist them.”**

**“A pressgang !” ejaculated Pike ; “Lord deliver us ! what a dangerous neighbourhood ! I trust the wretches have taken themselves off.”**

**“Yes, sir, they have all disappeared, and I suppose have carried off their prize with them.”**

**“Are you positive ?” demanded the bachelor.**

**“Quite, sir ; there is not a soul in the street, for, as they are mostly seafaring people in this quarter, they soon get out of the way when a pressgang is known to be abroad.”**

**“Then we had better be jogging,” said Pike,**

emerging from his retreat, and endeavouring to resume his usual brisk manner; "I hope none of the ladies were frightened."

"Oh, no! the alarm was not on our side," said Helen smiling.

"There was not the smallest ground for alarm on any side. None in the world," resumed Pike. "My unlucky coat seems to be the only sufferer. Allons! march."

The party advanced accordingly, until they reached the scene of the tumult they had witnessed; when Helen and Mary, who were in front, uttered a simultaneous cry of surprise on their discovering a figure lying prostrate and apparently insensible, close to the wall of a house.

"Some low, drunken fellow!" cried their companion; "you had better hurry on."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Helen; "by his dress and appearance, he is evidently not of the common class. Good Heavens! what shall we do to assist him?"

“Perhaps he has fallen down in a fit,” added Mary. With these words she ran up, for Helen seemed to be hesitating how to act, and turned the face of the stranger round towards the air, when they perceived that he was evidently a gentleman, and fresh exclamations of compassion and surprise burst from their lips, on their noticing his ghastly countenance and the death-like insensibility into which he had sunk. “He breathes, although his eyes are closed,” cried Mary. “It may be an attack of apoplexy — and yet he is quite young. He must have instant succour, or we know not what may happen. Dear Mrs. Skinner ! your house is close at hand ; will you allow me to summon some of the neighbours, that they may convey him thither ? ”

“Quite impossible, Miss Lomax ; and I wonder you should venture to make so very strange and indelicate a proposition. I know nothing of the party ; he may be an impostor

or a thief, for dress and appearance present nothing now-a-days. If I had ever seen him at Salem or Bethesda chapels, so as to be assured of his religious principles, it would be a different matter."

"Let him then be carried to my uncle's, at the Wharf, and I will be responsible for all the consequences," cried Helen.

"Nay," resumed Mary, "Cypress House is much nearer than Eagle Wharf, and we will have him immediately taken thither, since Mrs. Skinner objects to receive him."

"In that case," said the latter lady, "I shall defer my visit for the present; and indeed I now recollect there is a Tract Society meeting to-day, which I had promised to attend; so I must be under the necessity of wishing you good morning." With these words she coldly inclined her head, and hastily walked away down the next street.

"If you will have the goodness, Mr. Phil-

to run for a surgeon, I will collect a few of the neighbours, to carry this unfortunate gentleman to my father's," said Mary.

"It is painful to me to refuse any thing to the ladies, but in this instance you must really excuse me. I make it a rule never to interfere in affairs of this sort. Death may ensue ; then there will be a coroner's inquest, perhaps a public trial. I may be subpoenaed as a witness, and exposed to all sorts of annoyances and expenses, without getting a shilling for my time and trouble. Take my advice—have nothing to do with the business—it is no concern of your's. Send for a constable, and let the creature be carried to a chemist's or the Poorhouse."

"Both of these are distant. If we leave him, he may be robbed, or further maltreated ; perhaps he may perish. I am determined not to quit him till I see him deposited at Cypress House."

"There is poor Mrs. Skinner walking back

all alone," cried Pike; "that must not be. Cleanliness to the ladies is every thing. I will run after her, and accompany her home. Perhaps she may give me some spirits of turpentine to take the paint out of my coat." So saying, he ran hastily away, adding in a low tone, "Or perhaps she may ask me to dinner after all; who knows?"

Alone and unprotected, in a neighbourhood which had just been disturbed by violence both Helen and Mary might have felt the awkwardness of their situation, had not their thoughts been engrossed by anxiety to relieve the stranger as quickly as possible.

Helen's solicitude upon this subject almost defeated its object by the agitation into which it threw her; but her friend's collectedness and presence of mind did not for a moment desert her. Writing down the address of the nearest surgeon, she despatched a messenger to request his instant attendance, and then

hurrying to a house, from the window of which some men were gazing unconcernedly on the scene, she prevailed on them, by the promise of a reward, to take a door from its hinges, on which they placed the sufferer, and, raising him on their shoulders, proceeded at a quick walk towards Cypress House.

Mary followed as fast as she was able, but she was obliged to support her friend, whose energies seemed to fail her, now that the immediate necessity for their exertion had ceased, and who complained of a faintness which, for the moment, threatened to overcome her. A glass of water, however, helped to restore her powers; and, by leaning upon the arm of her companion, they were both enabled to reach Cypress House a few minutes after the arrival of the fainting stranger.

## CHAPTER III.

" Much she laboured to conceal  
 That gentlest passion of the breast,  
 Which all can feign, but few can feel:  
 Ingenuous fears the flame suppressed,  
 Yet still she owned its hidden power."

CARTWRIGHT.

LOMAX, who lived in perpetual apprehension  
 of an arrest by the officers of justice, no sooner  
 saw a posse of strangers approaching, than he  
 hurried to the door in the garden wall, intend-  
 ing to make his own escape by the river,  
 should his fears be realised, and caring little  
 or nothing for the fate of his wife.

A more accurate inspection of the party  
 as they crossed the court-yard, having satisfied

him that his forebodings were groundless, and that some accident had happened, he stole back to the house, and, on learning the nature of the occurrence, directed every assistance to be afforded. Little aid seemed to be required, for the patient's senses being presently restored, he opened his eyes, sate up on the sofa, and, having swallowed a cordial administered to him by the fair hand of Mary, was soon enabled to answer interrogatories without any apparent inconvenience.

He stated himself to be Evelyn Barlow, the son of a shipbuilder, at Deptford, adding that when he met the pressgang they were just placing handcuffs on one of his father's workmen, who, though he had formerly been a sailor, was no longer subject to impressment, being now beyond the limited age, and having, moreover, a protection.

“These facts I offered to substantiate,” continued the narrator, “and gave my card to the

leader of the party, but I was rudely thrust aside, and insulted with such gross abuse, that, in the irritation of the moment, I seized and struck the fellow who was dragging off his prisoner. One of his comrades instantly tripped up my heels, and I must have fallen with such violence against the wall of the house as to have stunned myself, for I have no recollection of what subsequently occurred. I have been an invalid lately, and I may perhaps have fainted away, but at all events I feel no other immediate inconvenience than a somewhat painful contusion at the back of my head, which is but a small punishment for so great an act of folly."

"I am surprised, indeed," said Mary, "that, being single-handed, and an invalid, you should have ventured to attack such a crew of ruffians."

"I have always considered impressment an outrage the more cruel and unwarrantable

because it often falls upon the industrious and the friendless ; and I could not command myself when I saw them dragging away old Edwards, an honest man, and the father of a family, (whom, even by their own lawless law, they had no right to touch) as if he had been the basest criminal. However, I was doubly wrong. I should not have put myself into a passion, and still less should I have used violence. By an application in the proper quarter, I have no doubt I shall get him released, and methinks I have already strength enough to set about it. Not a moment shall be lost."

So saying, he made an effort to rise, but it proved too much for his strength, and he again sunk back upon the sofa.

"Let me entreat you, sir," said Mary, with an impressive earnestness, "not to attempt to move, in your present precarious state. Until the arrival of the surgeon, for whom I sent

some time ago, you must really allow consider you our prisoner."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness forethought," said the patient, smiling ; as to the captivity with which you menace I should not quickly wish to terminate it, I not most anxious to procure the enlargement of Edwards, as well as apprehensive that my presence here may prove inconvenient."

Mary had just requested him to dismiss his fears upon the latter account, when the surgeon was announced, and she rejoined Helen, her usually sedate mood being exchanged for one of the liveliest animation, as she sang the praises of their temporary inmate. "What benevolence ! what heroism !" she exclaimed "to attack a whole pressgang in order to liberate a poor artisan, whom they were unjustly tearing away from his family !"

"Fool-hardiness might be a more appropriate term," observed Helen.

“Perhaps so, but I admire it nevertheless. When I consider his generous motive, I must applaud his temerity, reckless and uncontrollable as it was. I like the man who cannot witness an oppressive and illegal act without a burst of indignation, even though it may hurry him beyond the bounds of prudence.”

“I can easily fancy that you like the man,” said Helen, archly; “your looks and manner would have told me as much; but you go too far when you would vindicate the foolish desperation which he himself has condemned.”

“At all events,” replied Mary, blushing, “the candour with which he avows his fault should atone for it; and one may easily forgive a man for being a little too brave in a good cause.”

“Oh! I admit Mr. Barlow’s intrepidity, and only regret that it should be so badly seconded by his personal powers, and that he does not

possess the good looks as well as the valour of a hero of romance."

"He told us that he had been an invalid, which, in conjunction with his recent accident, might well account for his paleness. But his countenance expresses intelligence and amiability. What more would you require?"

"Nay, *I* require nothing; but he seems to combine all the good qualities that *you* desiderate, since you are equally pleased with his lack of colour and his superfluity of rashness."

Mary, who recurred in thought to the marked partiality of her friend, when Alfred Hunter had been vilipended, might easily have retaliated this raillery; but she never imitated the playful sallies of Helen, never indulged in a malicious pleasantry, never trifled with the feelings of others, even in joke, laying it down as a maxim that to give pain of any sort, and especially to one's friends, is equally ind-

**fens**ible, whether it be done in sport or in earnest.

She made no reply, therefore, to Helen's *badinage*, except by her blushes, and was by no means sorry when their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of her father, especially as he came to announce the opinion of the surgeon that Mr. Barlow had received no serious injury, although the delicate state of his health required precautions with which a more robust subject might have dispensed.

"He has been bled," continued Lomax, "and as he seems much more anxious about the impressed man than himself, and insists on taking legal steps for reclaiming him, before he is sent on board the tender, I have promised that our carriage shall convey him to Deptford, where his attorney resides, if he will only keep himself perfectly quiet for another half hour. He will afterwards proceed immediately to his father's, where he will of course receive

every attention, for, if I mistake not, he is an only son. I have often heard our neighbours speak of Mr. Barlow, the shipbuilder, as a very wealthy as well as worthy man."

"I hope the love at first sight will prove reciprocal," whispered Helen to her friend, "for the only son of a worthy and wealthy shipbuilder is a conquest not to be despised in these lover-less times. You will now have a choice of admirers—one who attacks press-gangs like a Don Quixote, and another who runs away from them like a Sancho Panza—while I, happy I, shall now stand a chance of getting the latter—alias, Mr. Jasper Pike—back again!"

Helen returned to Eagle Wharf, eager to relate to Rose Mayhew all that she had heard, seen, and encountered, during her absence, a recital which, with her habitual propensity to the ridiculous, she occasionally broadened into burlesque and caricature, though there was

**always** a basis of truth in her ludicrous **per-**  
**versions.** In recounting Mrs. Skinner's im-  
**putations** upon Alfred Hunter, Rose, who was  
**evidently** interested in the subject, insisted  
**upon** the cruelty of crediting insinuations  
**totally** unsupported by proof; and opposed  
**with** such success the affectionate praises of  
**his** mother and sister, the most competent  
**judges** of his character and conduct, to the  
**malignant** inuendoes of his calumniator, who  
**was** personally unacquainted with him, that  
**Helen,** driven in succession from all her as-  
**sumed** positions, and baffled in all her sham  
**charges,** gave up the contest, and retreated to  
**her** own room, feeling a pique against Rose  
**which** she could not subdue, although she  
**acknowledged** its injustice. No wonder that  
**she** was unable to explain her sensations, for  
**it was** the first time that her bosom had been  
**disturbed** by the pangs of jealousy.

**The** novelty and the painfulness of her sen-

sations—for she could not bear to harbour one unkindly feeling towards her gentle and amiable friend—induced her, in the solitude of her own chamber, to analyse the cause of her emotions. “How comes it,” she demanded of herself, “that, believing Hunter to be innocent, or at least only responsible for a few venial indiscretions, I pretended to think him guilty of every thing laid to his charge, unless it were to hoodwink Rose, and to conceal my real predilection in his favour? Why was I angry with her for the generous ardour with which she undertook his defence, except from an unworthy jealousy, of which, momentary as it was, I had hoped myself to be incapable? And why, after all, am I secretly pleased at the success of her exculpation? Alas! I fear there is but one answer to these questions—because I have a secret regard for her client. Well! I plead guilty—I confess the fact—and what then? By a combination of circumstances,

that give interest to his character, and by the display of endowments and accomplishments, little in accordance with his humble situation, Mr. Hunter has surprised my feelings into a compassion for his fate — into a pity on account of his family. And is not this sympathy with the unfortunate not only natural but laudable? His appearance is certainly exceedingly striking, and some of his good qualities may have excited my admiration; but I am not conscious of any leaning towards him beyond this excusable partiality; I am not aware of any regard that I cannot control and subdue just as I may think fit. As to my falling in love, and throwing myself away upon a wharf-clerk, the idea is too ridiculous. I am not likely, mad-cap as they used to call me, to commit any such gross impropriety, especially as I myself do not seem to have made the least impression upon the insensible creature, a fact which materially lowers my

estimate of him as to taste and discernment ! ”

In this half serious, half bantering strain reasoned with herself for some time, deciding at length that, as the novelty of finding so many unexpected recommendations in a clerk had been the principal cause of the predilection into which her feelings had been surprised, the most likely method of checking it was to avail of every opportunity of throwing herself into society, until she could meet him with perfect indifference.

“ Familiarity,” thought Helen, “ breeds contempt ; and in a few weeks I have no doubt I shall look upon Mr. Hunter—not with dislike for he must always merit my respect on account of his misfortunes, but with scarcely more possession than I entertain for Mr. Jasper I who, as an epitome of the take-care-of-numbers sort of people, may be considered my favourite aversion, my pet horror.”

Poor Helen's expedient for conquering her incipient regard by familiarizing herself with its object was a device that will never succeed, until steel can deprive the magnet of its attraction by frequency of collision. Circumstances were as favourable as she could wish for the full trial of the experiment.

Mrs. Bryant, anxious to make her stay at the Wharf as agreeable as possible, and never entertaining a moment's thought that her heiress niece could dream of attaching herself to "a poor creature who was completely down in the world, and had not one guinea to rub against another," frequently invited Hunter to spend the evening up stairs, a courtesy which he always eagerly accepted and gratefully acknowledged.

Helen and Rose were both equally anxious to draw forth the accomplishments of which they had received the first knowledge from his mother and sister; and, as their visitant was not less desirous to ingratiate himself with

his fair companions, and more especially with Rose, by whom he had been smitten at first sight, and who daily gained a stronger hold of his heart and his imagination, he readily lent himself to their views. His portfolio, which contained drawings still more beautiful than any they had yet seen, was submitted to their inspection; and, while Helen played the piano, he frequently sang duets with her friend.

Rose Mayhew, a creature of the most susceptible temperament, who was all sensibility and enthusiasm, and who had already felt the profoundest commiseration for Hunter, on account of the humble state to which his reverses had doomed him, was not proof against the touching tenderness that glistened in his eyes and trembled in his voice, whenever he sang the sufferings of a hopeless and yet ineradicable passion. By that mysterious intuition, which enables lovers to develop each other's secret, while it is yet folded in the bud, and no breath

improvident, speculative, charges so often brought against him both by Mr. and Mrs. Bryant, and so feebly rebutted, that she could scarcely doubt their truth. By marrying him under such circumstances, she should only aggravate the distress with which he was already contending, while she might not improbably occasion him to forfeit the favour of Mr. Bryant.

For a misplaced affection there is perhaps no effectual cure but absence, a remedy which poor Rose was so far from being enabled to apply, that she was brought, by a combination of untoward circumstances, into almost daily communication with the party whom she would most willingly have avoided.

Of the perpetual contest thus engendered with her feelings the effect soon became visible, for she was too delicate in her conformation, both mental and corporeal, to be able to sustain it with impunity. Her spirits and her health

sank beneath the effect. A wan hue succeeded to her clear olive-coloured complexion ; she lost all taste for her usual occupations ; unconscious sighs frequently escaped from her ; and, when rallied by Helen upon her dejection, she denied it with a faint and forced smile, little in accordance with her saddened heart. Often were her large earnest eyes fixed upon the ground, while her thoughts were wandering elsewhere ; and, when aroused from her reverie, she no longer shook aside the dark locks that shadowed her face, and looked laughing forth, like the sun from a disparted cloud, but sought some pretext for hastily quitting the apartment, in order to conceal the unbidden tear that was stealing down her cheek.

Nor was the experiment of Helen much more successful than that of her friend. Familiarity, she found, did not *always* breed contempt. On the contrary, the more she saw of Hunter, the greater became her admiration of his conver-

sational powers and of his various attainments. Much too quick-sighted, however, to be blind to his faults, she saw that he was wayward, irritable, and so inconsistent in his moods that she was sometimes puzzled to decide upon his real disposition.

In the hope of conquering her prepossession by setting it at variance with her judgment and her convictions, she dwelt on the more discreditable imputations levelled against him by Mrs. Skinner, which, though they were doubtless coloured by her malice, had never been formally disproved, and might, after all, be built upon a basis of truth. Her logic convinced her judgment better than her heart.

Fully admitting his errors, she had the mortification of finding that she still loved a man whom she could not altogether esteem, and who had not afforded her the smallest intimation of reciprocating her attachment. Her pride was wounded at the discovery ; she was indignant

at her inability to eradicate a feeling which she began to consider equally inexcusable and indelicate; but she was too strong-minded and vivacious to sink under this contest, like her timid and sensitive friend. Her mood was altered indeed, but it betrayed itself chiefly in the forced and artificial hilarity which she endeavoured to substitute for her failing spirits, and in an occasional peevishness and petulance towards others, engendered by her dissatisfaction with herself. Even Rose was not always excepted from her perverseness, although it was remarkable that at this juncture the two friends, by a sort of tacit compact, generally refrained from all allusion to the secret object of their joint attachment.

Nor was Hunter's situation a whit less trying and painful than that of his fair companions. As the talents and attractions of the winning, the fascinating, the irresistible Rose Mayhew received a daily development, he became more

irrecoverably enamoured, and at the same time more fully persuaded of the impossibility of their union. Not for worlds would he have made the gifted being, whom he thus admired with all the ardour of an enthusiastic temperament, the partner of his broken and desperate fortunes ; and he strove, therefore, most earnestly, though, as we have shown, unsuccessfully, to conceal from her the flame she had kindled in his bosom. He felt himself tied to a stake from which there was no escape, and the baiting to which his heart was exposed became manifest in his increased dejection alternating with splenetic moods and a more frequent neglect of his official duties, which drew down upon him the quick reproaches of the vigilant Mr. Bryant, and occasioned their squabbles to be more numerous and sharp than ever.

Thus did the blind Deity appear to have visited Eagle Wharf, only that he might in-

dulge in his favourite pastime, and gratify his malice by getting up a game of cross-purposes, in which his victims, the more they strove to set themselves free, only became the more inextricably involved.

## CHAPTER IV.

"First worship God ; he that forgets to pray  
Bids not himself good morrow, nor good day."

T. RANDI

"You seem very fond of reading,"  
Helen one evening to Hunter, on his presenting  
a new publication which he had borrowed  
the perusal of herself and her friend.

"Fond of it !" was the reply. "That is  
too tame and cold a word to express the  
thusiasm, the rapture, with which, after  
grovelling and hateful labours of the day,  
mind throws off the galling yoke of business  
and rushes into the green pastures of literature.  
O Miss Owen ! you, who have ever enjoyed

the inestimable privilege of commanding your own time, and the still more precious power of suffering your unshackled thoughts to range at will; you, to whom mental delights have been a daily pastime, of which the very frequency must, in some degree, have diminished the zest; you can scarcely imagine how intense a passion they become to one who can only indulge in them at rare and stolen intervals; one who has been conversant during the tedious day with nothing but dull or revolting material elements; who has been disgusted by vegetating in the midst of vulgar and ignorant plodders, scarcely more congenial to his taste than the mercantile objects with which they are surrounded. To turn from such darkness and drudgery, and soar into the heaven of intellectual light and liberty; to feel that your soul has spread its wings, and lifted you above the dull earth into a delicious and resplendent atmosphere of intelligence, wherein it may expatiate

without control ; to be conscious that you stand therein, like a throned Deity, Omnipotent and alone, wielding that mysterious power of thought which can subjugate both time and space, and penetrate whatever it touches with an electric potency ; to conjure up a thousand visions of enchantment, and yet to entertain no fear that the stores of such magic delight will ever be exhausted ; this, this is a transport, a glory, an extacy, for which life has no parallel, and language has no echo."

" You describe it, as you have felt it—like a poet," said Helen, " and I can imagine your enjoyments, although the Muse has never touched me with her wand. Here is one, however, who, being a secret votary of Apollo, appears to have sympathized with you more deeply. ' See how our partner's rapt ! ' "

She pointed to Rose, who, having intently fixed her eyes upon Hunter during his impassioned effusion, while a momentary flush lighted

up her cheek, and her expressive features played in delighted accord with the sentiments she heard, still retained her look and posture, as if she had been transfixed by his accents.

“How? what? Were you speaking to me?” cried the abashed girl, starting from her reverie, shaking a dark veil of ringlets over her face, throwing down the long fringe of her eyes, and crossing her hands upon her bosom in blushing perturbation. “I was thinking of something else. I have been so strangely absent of late, but I quite agree with Mr. Hunter. Oh no! I mean with Helen. Were you not observing ——? Yes, your soul spread its wings, did it not?”

Attempting to recover her self-possession, the nervous girl brought on one of her fits of confusion, which she was increasing by her incoherent discourse, when Helen came to her rescue, by exclaiming to their companion:—

“Having so few hours for indulging your taste, you must almost grudge every minute of your spare time that is given to company.”

“Not where it combines the charms of intellect with those of pleasant and polished society as in the present instance,” replied Hunter bowing to Helen, though the feeling had been mainly awakened by the talents and attractions of her friend.

It was the first time that he had ever addressed to the former any thing like a personal compliment, and his manner of conveying it was at once so pointed and deferential, that it brought a passing blush to her cheek, and accelerated the pulsation of her heart during the remainder of their colloquy.

“The conversations,” continued Hunter, “with which I have been honoured, together with the musical and other amusements in which I have been allowed to participate since

the arrival of yourself and Miss Mayhew at Eagle Wharf, have been an unspeakable comfort to me, and would, indeed, have completely reconciled me to my lot, if certain considerations — not that I am presumptuous enough to imagine —, mine is a very peculiar fate, and not less painful than peculiar.”

He stopped in evident embarrassment, and sighed deeply.

“When I sounded him as to his disposition for company,” thought Helen, “he evaded my question by a compliment. Another of Mrs. Skinner’s charges, and one of a much more grave nature, remains to be cleared up, and I am determined that he shall not elude it.”

With this view she continued :—“I presume, sir, that your Sundays are generally devoted to literature, for I have been informed that you rarely attend any place of public worship.”

“I am not much surprised at this charge,”

replied Hunter, with a slight reddening of the cheeks. "for our neighbourhood is infested with a set of most illiberal and intolerant persons. Peace be with them, for they have need of it. Some there are, as I now learn, who go to church, not so much that they may feel themselves in the presence of their Creator, as that they may pry around them, and note down the absence of their neighbours, for the purpose of circulating against them the most injurious aspersions. Most freely do I forgive them, but I cannot sympathize with their inquisitive and uncharitable devotion."

"Nor is it necessary," replied Helen. "Higher and holier motives might, nevertheless, attract you to some place of public worship, to say nothing of the duty and example that you owe to society."

"I am not, Miss Owen, one of those pharisaical formalists who are more anxious to be seen of men than approved of Heaven, and

I have withdrawn from Salem and Bethesda chapels, because the gloomy and intolerant doctrines of its preachers appear to me so eminently unchristian as even to desecrate the buildings that echo them. I cannot substitute bad dogmas for good works. I cannot bear to behold our noblest arts, and all the resources of wealth, lavished upon the walls of a sacred edifice, while its divine service may be delegated to a man of mean intellect and uncharitable heart. Surely, God, who gave all, deserves the best, and much more so in the mental than in the material offering : his house of prayer needs the enlightened understanding, and the benevolent feelings of the minister, rather than the sculptured stone, and the gilded decorations of the architect."

"There are many other places of worship," resumed Helen, "where your devotional feelings would derive warmth from the talents and fervour of the priest; and you will, surely,

admit that the Sabbath ought not to pass over without some sort of religious observance."

"Certainly not. With me, indeed, it could not so pass, even if I had no sacred fane which I could betake myself, for, never, never do I thrill with a more heartfelt piety, than the God-built temple of Nature, where the sunbeams play around me, like angels of light fresh from heaven, their eyes twinkling in the flowers, their breath fragrant in the breeze, their voices blending in faint murmurs with the hymn of the bees and the chant of the birds."

"Am I to infer, then, that, because you have so keen a sense of solitary devotion, you do not recognize the importance of public worship?"

"You are to draw no such conclusion from what I have said. I myself have, perhaps, less occasion than others to go to church, for the church comes to me, wherever I may be wandering; but the multitude, I am well aware

do not share these feelings. Unimaginative and unreflecting, they require some worship that shall address itself to their senses, and it may be doubted whether they would not quickly lose every sentiment of religion, unless it were regularly stamped upon their minds by a participation in the stated observances and solemn forms of public Sabbath service. With this conviction I feel that the duty of social is still more imperative than that of private worship ; the community has a claim upon every individual, however humble, for the benefit of his example ; and on these accounts I have almost always, I wish I could say invariably, attended divine service on the Sunday. In such indiscriminate meetings, the wealthy and the powerful, too apt to become exclusive and arrogant, learn humility and benevolence : after such elevating communion, the peasant—I am now about to quote one of my favourite writers — ‘ rises from his knees, and feels himself a man.

He learns philosophy without its pride, and a spirit of liberty without its turbulence. Every time social worship is celebrated, it includes virtual declaration of the rights of man.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Helen was about to make some observation in reply, when the harsh voice of Bryant, as he abruptly entered the room, grated upon her ear, like the dissonance of a broken wire in piano, and the whole party instantly became silent. Hunter, indeed, rarely spoke in her presence, and his companions were too much affected by what they had just heard, to stir any other subject.

Bryant, however, though he guessed by the silence and their looks that his appearance was not particularly acceptable, stood upon the ceremony, but demanded of his clerk in peremptory language, and with a frown of displeasure, why he had not executed the order given to him in the morning.

\* Mrs. Barbauld's Works, vol. ii. p. 448.

Indignant at being thus sternly catechized before his fair friends, Hunter's countenance immediately assumed an expression of defiance; an angry altercation ensued, and the parties presently quitted the room, wrangling loudly together.

"Well," exclaimed Helen, deviating from the reserve which had existed between the friends for some time past on the subject of Hunter, "what think you of our *çi-devant* knight of the rueful visage? Mrs. Skinner had a better basis than usual for her scandal, when she accused him of having latterly been an habitual absentee from chapel. And, after the specimen we have just had of his irritability and rudeness, for he bolted out of the room in fierce altercation, and without noticing either you or me, what would be your verdict as to his alleged ill-nature?"

"How should he be free from inconsistencies and even faults," replied Rose, "for

I do not think any positive vices have yet been brought home to him, when circumstances have thrown him into so false a position, and he is so utterly out of his element ! In his impatience, he frets for a more appropriate sphere, even as the hart panteth for the water brooks. The caged eagle and the imprisoned lion are fierce, intractable, and unhappy : but we think not the worse of them because they cannot reconcile themselves to their unworthy doom."

" I forgot that you were his champion, and I know not where he could have found a more able and eager one."

" I am not Mr. Hunter's champion," replied Rose, with a slight air of reserve ; " nor am I conscious of being eager, though I may be earnest. I merely spoke my convictions."

" You need not have told me you were so earnest ; I see it in your looks and tones. But say, my grave, sweet, and beautiful little ad-

vocate, what are your convictions as to your client's *etourderie* at the beginning of our colloquy, when, with confusion and hesitation, he said that he should be completely reconciled to his lot except for certain considerations, which he left unexplained: and stammered about his not being so presumptuous as to imagine—something or other which he very provokingly left *us* to imagine? Now, if I were half so poetical and fanciful as he is, I could almost have dreamed from his compliments, and the tenderness of his looks and tones, that the man was actually in love with me. Ha! ha! ha! only it would be really too ridiculous.”

“I see nothing ridiculous in the supposition,” faltered Rose. “Mr. Hunter is a gentleman by birth and education, and, were I in his situation, I am sure I could not have helped falling in love with you.”

“But, were you in mine, dear Rose, could *you* fall in love with *him*?”

"Nay, Helen, how can I enter into your feelings? I cannot tell—no—yes—in love with Mr. Hunter—a gentleman—do not ask me. Dear, dear, what am I saying?"

"My sweet Rose!" exclaimed her friend in a tone of anxious affection, "what can the matter with you? You tremble all over and look as pale as a ghost. Positively you must yield to the wishes I have more than once expressed, and take medical advice, for both your health and spirits have been decidedly failing you for some time past."

"No, no," murmured Rose, making an effort to recover herself; "I felt faint for a moment—perhaps the altercation between Mr. Hunter and Mr. Bryant had a little frightened me, but I am quite—quite well, now—and very—very happy."

As she pronounced these words, the poor girl burst into tears, and hurried out of the room, while her friend sought Mrs. Bryant.

request that a physician might be summoned,  
to decide upon the nature of her complaint and  
suggest the proper remedies.

## CHAPTER V.

“There’s one yonder, and carried to prison, w  
five thousand of you all.”

SHAKS

A FEW days after this conversation, as  
and Rose were sitting together, a timid  
at the door was heard, and the servant  
to announce Mrs. Hunter, who stole i  
room with a significant smile upon her fe  
exclaiming, as she glanced round the apa:  
—“What ! nobody else here ? neither !  
Mrs. Bryant ? Well, I am glad of  
when one has a secret that one parti  
wishes to keep, I do think the fewer th  
tells it to the better, especially if yo

not depend upon them — don't you, Miss Owen ? ”

“ That is a proposition upon which I would not venture to decide without due deliberation,” said Helen, in her bantering strain ; “ but upon the first blush of the question, I should feel *rather* inclined to agree with you.”

“ No doubt, my dear ; but I don't know why I should be so anxious to keep my little discovery a secret, only I feared the mention of it might displease Mr. or Mrs. Bryant, who have no great turn that way, and I don't want them to have any excuse for fresh quarrels with dear Alfred, as they are always sneering and girding at him for his giving up his time to such pursuits. I believe I stated that neither of them have any great turn that way themselves.”

“ You did,” said Helen ; “ but you omitted to mention what way.”

“ Did I ? only think of my being so thoughtless ! The fact is, I have made a little dis-

covery about dear Alfred, who has lately, I find, been returning to his old loves, and has been secretly courting — la, Miss Mayhew, how the colour flushes up into your face, and how beautiful it makes you look! what a pity you hav'n't always got such a nice colour, instead of being so pale and sickly!”

“I do not exactly see what my friend's complexion can have to do with Mr. Hunter's courtship,” said Helen, assuming an air of indifference, though she was all impatience for the expected disclosure.

“No more do I, especially as I had only discovered that he had been secretly courting the Muse. You know I told you he was a poet, although he has written little or nothing since our troubles, and, Heaven knows, they have been enough to — la! there's mackerel crying three a-shilling; well, that's not dear! However, I must tell you the story. I was washing out his neckcloths early this morn—

ing, not so much to save the expense, but Harriet and I can get them up so much better than the laundress, and Alfred ties his so well and so genteelly, and it makes such a difference in a man's appearance, though Alfred, I am proud to say, *always* looks like a gentleman—Well, I was thinking of my dear boy, and of the degrading occupation to which he was reduced, so different from what he had a right to expect, when the tears stole down my cheeks, without my knowing it, and fell into the tub, and it did appear to me so very ridiculous that they should be wasted in that way, by dropping into the soapsuds, that I could not help bursting into a fit of laughter, though I believe I was half crying all the time. So Harriet came running in to know what was the matter, for God knows I hardly ever laugh now, though I was once merry enough ; and then she told me that two strangers had called for Alfred immediately after breakfast, and he

had gone out with them ; so I went into ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> room to set it to rights, for when he is absent <sup>it</sup> it's a comfort to me to be always doing some ~~thing~~ thing or other for him, and there upon the ~~table~~ table what should I see but—la, what a beautiful collar, Miss Owen !—did you work it yourself?—such a neat little sprig all round the ~~border~~ border !—Let me see—where was I ? ”

“ You had just got out of the washing-tub, and we left you on the table,” said Helen.

“ Ay, so I was ; well, what *should* I discover on the table but this paper, which I snatched up, and then ran down stairs to speak to Mrs. Tibbs, the landlady, about oiling the jack, it does make such a horrid creaking, and if there is one noise I hate more than another, it is ”—

“ But the paper ? ” interposed both her auditors simultaneously—“ what did it contain ? ”

“ Why, my dears, some verses, which I will read to you, though Alfred evidently left them unfinished, and I dare say will make them much

stier when he comes to polish them up. I  
n't imagine, for my part, how he could think  
it all, and make the lines rhyme together,  
ich I am sure I could never do for the life  
me."

The old lady then adjusted her spectacles,  
d, with an apprehensiveness and propriety,  
uch more correct than could have been anti-  
pated from the rambling silliness of her dis-  
cuse, read a devotional effusion of consider-  
le length.

"Isn't it beautiful?" asked the delighted  
other, at its conclusion.—"And only think  
poor Alfred, who can write such nice verses,  
rhyming at the end, being compelled to  
ke entries all day long in a stupid journal  
d ledger, where there isn't a single rhyme;  
else to stand beside the great scales, and  
e down the weights of nasty casks of tallow  
turpentine!"

"I admire Mr. Hunter's poetry," said Helen,

“and I sincerely rejoice that he has found so delightful a solace in the midst of his many trials.”

“Well, now, that’s very kind of you, dear Miss Owen, and, for my part, I believe it was meant by Heaven that there should be a consolation of some sort under all our afflictions. Now, for instance, they have just raised the price of candles, but then the days are getting longer, and we shan’t burn so many, which is all owing to the Providence that watches over us.”

“I quite agree with you that every sorrow has its solace,” said Helen, whose sympathy and kindlier feelings had subdued, for the moment, all her propensity to joking. “Our reverses often produce blessings, as the night brings forth the morning ; and I sincerely hope that you and your family will soon emerge from beneath your present cloud, into brighter and better days.”

“Thank you, thank you, my sweet Miss

ment, which continued for some minutes after Mrs. Hunter had quitted the room, was broken by Helen's exclaiming—"I believe you were right, my darling Rose de Meaux! Our knight of the quill may have peculiar notions, but irreligious he is not; and so far the puritanical Mrs. Skinner stands convicted, for the five hundredth time, of most uncharitable destruction. These verses have evidently been drawn forth by our late conversation on the subject."

"I never believed the charge," said Rose, "for I knew Mr. Hunter to be a man of talent and a poet, both of which I consider irreconcilable with a want of devotion. He seems, moreover, if his mother and sister may be credited, to be correct in his conduct, and amiable in his affections, which is, in fact, to be practically pious."

"The testimony of his family is rather creditable to themselves than to him," said

Helen, who, somehow or other, always spoke the most disparagingly of Hunter, when she secretly felt the most prepossessed in his favour. "Then you must recollect, dear Rose, that Mrs. Skinner's further charges of his addiction to low company, and his occasional deep potations, remain yet to be cleared up."

"I have no doubt they are quite as false as his imputed irreligion," replied Rose, as she quitted the room, anxious to lose no time in writing down the verses which she had partly committed to memory.

"My friend seems determined to vindicate him upon every occasion," whispered Helen to herself. "This is ridiculous enough; but, judging all the world by her own pure and benevolent heart, she cannot be brought to harbour an unfavourable impression of any one. After all, what *can* it signify to *me* whether the man be a Jonathan Wild or a Sir

Charles Grandison? What's he to Hecuba or Hecuba to him? Nothing. Wherefore, as nothing can come of nothing, I will waste no more time upon the subject, but resume my back."

Her eyes were accordingly fixed upon the page, but her thoughts, notwithstanding her recent decision as to the nullity of the inquiry, still continued to balance the pros and cons of Hunter's character, in which occupation she had remained about half an hour, without turning over a single leaf, when the door was abruptly thrown open, and Mrs. Hunter rushed into the room, her usually placid face flushed with heat and agitation, and discoloured with tears.

"Mr. Bryant! where is Mr. Bryant?" she exclaimed, panting for breath and looking wildly round the room.

"He is gone out," said Helen; "he and my aunt crossed the river early this morning to

visit some friends on the opposite bank. But you tremble ; my dear madam, pray sit down—what has disturbed you thus ? ”

“O, Miss Owen ! I am a wretched, lost woman ! ” cried the visitant, throwing herself into a chair. “ What will become of me ? what will become of poor Harriet ? I shall never hold up my head again — My son, my dear son ! he was our sole support—he was our only—”

Unable to complete the sentence, she buried her face in her hands, and, while the fresh-gushing tears trickled through her fingers, swayed her head backwards and forwards in an agony of grief.

“ What can possibly have happened ? ” demanded Helen, her voice and look attesting the agitated state of her feelings.

“ The worst, the worst, the very worst that *could* have happened — my precious, my kind-hearted boy ! I have lost—I have lost my dear Alfred.”

“Gracious Heaven” ejaculated Helen, with a cry of terror and amazement, “I saw him only yesterday in perfect health.”

“In health!” repeated the mother, looking up at the exclamation she had heard; “well, so he is now, I hope and trust; only they have arrested him for debt and thrown him into prison, and, I know not, poor as we all are, how he is ever to be got out again. Those horrid men, with whom he went away so early this morning, were bailiffs, and he wouldn’t mention it for fear of alarming us, especially as he hoped to get assistance from a friend, in which he has been disappointed. But, la! Miss Owen, what is the matter with you? How your colour comes and goes, and how you tremble and pant for breath, just as little Miss Mayhew did, when I talked of Alfred’s courting the Muse. I fear I must have frightened you out of your wits, and no wonder, for I am almost scared out of my own. My poor, dear Alfred!

by suggesting that Mr. Bryant would less exert himself to procure her son charge.

“That is what I came to petition for, the mother; “but I have no hope of success none whatever. Alfred is already indebted him for an advance of salary; they have had a fresh quarrel together; and Mr. warned both him and me, only a few days that, if he could not manage to live with income, he should send him trooping; with no other friends in the world, and as raising eighty pounds —”

“Eighty pounds!” interposed Helen *that* the whole amount of the debt for which has been arrested?”

“Yes; but we are as unable to pay it had been a thousand.”

Overcome by surprise and pleasure intelligence, for she had anticipated some sum, Helen could not suppress a laugh

of my father, has always been so liberal that has enabled me to make a purse of my own. In this writing-desk I have a bank-note of one hundred pounds which I was just about to add to my little separate investment, but which I shall think a thousand times better bestow if you will do me the favour of accepting it. You can repay me, you know, at some future day, when you get a prize in the lottery, for Mr. Hunter, if I mistake not, occasionally turns his fortune in that way."

With these words she unlocked the desk and handed over the bank-note to her companion, who, during the process, looked on in a state of amazed bewilderment, as if she doubted the evidence of her senses. When, however, her doubts were dispelled, she melted in a flood of gratitude, and sobbed in a broken voice, "God bless you! God bless you, dear Owen! feel my heart — *that* must tell you for I can scarcely speak—I am almost

After a brief interval, during which she continued to gaze wistfully at the note, with the tears glistening in her eyes, she added, "And yet I ought not to take this money without knowing how I am to repay it. Alfred, it is true, is constantly speculating in the Lottery, which is one cause of his present embarrassment; but it is not for himself — it is all for me and Harriet, in the hope of placing us in a more comfortable situation. But, alas ! alas ! he is always unfortunate—there is no luck for any of our family ; we shall never be enabled to get out of your debt."

"Then do me the favour to accept this trifle as a little token of friendship," said Helen, who had only alluded to repayment from motives of delicacy, although her simple-hearted visitant had taken her words in a literal sense.

"That I will !" exclaimed Mrs. Hunter, throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her. "I don't mind taking it from you, because

I should have delighted in giving it to you ; and though I cannot express my gratitude, my dear Alfred, who is as eloquent as he is warm-hearted, will hurry hither, I am sure, the moment he is at liberty, to offer—”

“Nay, nay,” interrupted Helen, blushing, “I forgot to make one positive stipulation. This little transaction must remain a secret between you and me. It must be concealed from every body, and particularly from Mr. Hunter.”

“Well, my dear Miss Owen ! if you will have it so, I must obey, and indeed I shall be glad to hide it from Mr. Bryant, for fear of the consequences. They quarrel enough, as it is ; but I am sure it cannot be Alfred’s fault, for he is the kindest creature in the world. Dear ! dear ! what shall I say to account for his absence ?”

“You had better lose no time in effecting his liberation,” observed Helen.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ —————Beauty, pomp,  
With every sensuality our giddiness  
Doth frame an idol—are inconstant friends,  
When any troubled passion makes us halt  
On the unguarded castle of the mind.”

SEVERAL trifling circumstances, which in their minuteness would have escaped the notice of a male eye, convinced Helen that Mary Lomax had been strongly prepossessed, even at their first interview, in favour of Evelyn Barlow, and the result quickly proved the truth of her conclusions. Not having the same clue, however, to the feelings of the other sex, nor the same opportunities of observation, she did not so soon detect that the predilection was reciprocal, and that a mutual at-

tachment had sprung up between them, of which the progress was much more rapid than might have been anticipated from the diffident character of both parties.

Women, who may be timid without reproach, are more especially prone to admire the display of an opposite quality in those men whose appearance and conformation seem hardly compatible with mental energy and a daring hardihood. Barlow was an instance of this combination; he possessed, moreover, a singular suavity and gentleness of demeanour, a melodious, but earnest and impressive voice, together with a retiring, unobtrusive, manner, not often to be encountered in the young men of the present school.

To Mary this blending of the manly in spirit with a tincture of the feminine in feeling and deportment seemed an union of the best qualities peculiar to either sex, which she admired for its rarity, and esteemed for its worth,

especially when subsequent inquiries confirmed all her predilections. As it has been stated that she herself, beneath a sedate and almost grave exterior, possessed a profound susceptibility, it will excite no surprise that, when the hitherto-sealed fountain of her affections had found a channel, it should be rapid and exuberant in its flow. The almost daily visits of Barlow, his deferential demeanour, for true love ever contemplates its object with a feeling that approaches to religious homage, and, above all, the silent courtship of his eyes, soon convinced her of his attachment; nor, while her heart fully responded to the tenderness she had inspired, was she insensible to the peculiar eligibility of the match, should he make a regular declaration of love. Upon almost every subject there existed between them a perfect conformity of opinion; his good qualities were admitted by all; his family were respectable and wealthy; and their residence,

**which** was at an easy distance, would scarcely **interfere** with the discharge of her filial duties, **should** she be called upon to preside over an **establishment** of her own in so near a neighbourhood.

Cypress House, with its grandeur and its ~~gloom~~, its alternations of intemperate excess, ~~moody~~ melancholy, and fierce strife between ~~her~~ parents, had become so thoroughly distasteful to her, that nothing could have reconciled her to her lot, but a sense of duty and an innate strength of mind. Abundant, therefore, and cogent, were the reasons for wishing to quit her present abode, while she had no countervailing motive for attaching her to it, except her affection for her brother Benjamin, whose health, which at first appeared to have been strengthened by the change of air, had again begun to give way. She reflected, however, that, if she became a resident in the immediate vicinity, she would still be enabled to

see him as often as she wished. Her mother, whatever might be her state of mind, never relaxed for a single instant her watchful and anxious ministrings to her darling boy ; nor did Mary, although she noticed his increasing debility, imagine him to be affected with any very serious malady.

Barlow's parents, who had called at Cypress House to return thanks for the attentions lavished upon him, and who had enjoyed various subsequent opportunities of becoming better acquainted with Mary, were scarcely less pleased with her than their son, and eagerly gave their assent to his soliciting her hand in marriage. His constitutional diffidence would not allow him to propose to her in a personal interview ; he made his offer, therefore, in a letter, worded with a characteristic frankness and fervour ; and Mary, who was equally superior to the affected coyness of the prude, and the silly caprices of the coquette,

accepted it in a brief and simple reply, which, having been previously submitted to the inspection of her father and mother, had met their entire and delighted concurrence.

“What say you now, Joel?” demanded Mrs. Lomax, who, as a set-off against the manifold annoyances and miseries entailed upon themselves by their joint crime, delighted to have an opportunity of dwelling upon its incalculable advantages to their children — “What say you now? Were we not wise to do *the deed*? It is doubtful whether we should even have saved the life of our darling Benjamin, and mine is wrapped up in his, had he not been enabled to command all the advantages of inoccupation, and the luxuries of wealth, besides having a physician in almost daily attendance upon him. But for *the deed*, for which you are mainly indebted to me, we must have seen our angel boy, spite of his delicate

health, condemned to some hateful drudgery, not less miserable, humiliating, and noxious, than that from which you yourself have been redeemed. We must have endured the anguish, the indescribable torture, of seeing him pining and wasting away before our eyes, knowing that toil and confinement were accelerating his death, and yet totally without the means of preventing so cruel, so heart-withering, a sacrifice."

"Very true, very true," mumbled the husband; whose senses were often muddled, even in the morning, from the depth of his overnight's potations.

"And our dear Mary," resumed the wife — "but for *the deed*, what would have been her fate? Of her marriage there would not have been the smallest chance, unless she had chosen to steep herself to the lips in poverty and degradation, by accepting the dirty hand of some low mechanic. No, she must have worn out

her eyes as a sempstress, or have continued to starve upon the paltry pittance which she was sometimes enabled to pick up by copying music for the shops ; whereas she will now be united to a gentleman of fortune — the object of her fond attachment ; she will occupy a handsome house, ride in her own carriage, dwell in our immediate vicinity, and thus afford us not only the solace of her society, but the delight of witnessing her happiness.”

The husband groaned, as he exclaimed with a reproachful look, “She will never witness our’s—not mine, at least.”

. “Because you are a miserable hypochondriac, and a cowardly self-tormentor. Would you have been happier, think you, had you not done the deed? Your breaking health and your unsteady hand were daily incapacitating you more and more for your situation of a clerk ; and to what would you have betaken yourself after the death of Hoffman, and the

expenditure of his pitiful legacy? Old, ~~and~~ <sup>in-</sup>  
~~firm~~ and ~~useless~~, you must have begged your  
bread in the public streets, unless you had  
thought fit to accompany your family to the  
Poor House."

"Perhaps so; but I should not have been  
miserable and half mad; I should not have  
been beset with terrors in the day, and haunted  
with ghastly visions at night that scare me  
from my sleep: I should not have found life a  
burden, and yet have been afraid to die."

"What so dastardly a spirit as your's might  
have found or imagined, I cannot undertake to  
determine: I only know that you would not  
have found wealth, station, respect, equipage,  
sumptuous dinners, and rare wines, all of which  
you at present enjoy."

"No such thing, Jane; I use them, but I  
do not enjoy them; I enjoy nothing. Nature  
never meant me to be a guilty man, for I have  
not a heart of iron in my bosom. Had I known

What it was to be a criminal, a felon, I would have laid down my life at once, rather than live as I do now in the perpetual, the horrible dread of detection and the gallows. Oh, that appalling scene at the Old Bailey ! It pursues me—it stands before me whichever way I look ; if I shut my eyes I still distinctly see it ; and in my dreams I feel the accursed halter suffocating and throttling me, and undergo an almost nightly execution.”

“ What ! have you not yet dismissed that silly nightmare from your thoughts ? I should have supposed that the utter groundlessness of your past terrors would have prevented their recurrence. Which of your idle apprehensions has been confirmed ? Not a single one. Who comes forward to accuse us, or to dispute our claim to the fine fortune which we have every reason to presume we shall transmit undisputed to our dear children ? Nobody. Consider how many months have now elapsed, and no proceedings

have been instituted. Of Edward Ruddock we hear nothing. Had he intended to challenge our right, he would have been here long ago. He has probably been killed by the pestilential climate of South America; and, as to your beleaguering scarecrow, the phantom of a heated and terrified imagination, the vision of the area, and the tall thin gentleman, ——."

"Jane! Jane! for Heaven's sake, make no allusion to that terrible man. Too often already is he conjured up before me. Why? why will you not remove the picture that hangs over the fire-place in the dining-room? I have spoken of it before, and would have done it myself, but that I feared to approach it."

"What! the fine painting of Satan after the Fall? How does it offend you?"

"Its eyes are like those of the mysterious stranger whom I last saw at the Old Bailey. They glare at me menacingly, they are fixed upon me wherever I stand; and sometimes me-

the frightful figure brandishes its spear,  
on its frame, and chases me round the

this is the phantasmagoria seen through  
the fumes of wine ; this is one of your after-  
visions. If you would not stupify  
yourself by intoxication, Satan would remain  
in his frame. However, the picture  
is instantly removed."

"Thank you, thank you," exclaimed Lo-  
mo seemed to feel as if he had been re-  
deemed from one of his spectral enemies.

"Listen to me attentively," resumed the  
Mr. Barlow and his family are likely  
to be frequent visitants at Cypress House  
during the courtship of Evelyn and Mary.  
I do not, I implore you, observe any thing  
that will dissatisfy them with the match, and  
prompt them to break it off. For the  
sake of all, let our bickerings and wranglings be  
ended ; they are always vain and dangerous,

and now they would be more especially mischievous, since few people like to connect themselves with a disunited family ; and Evelyn Barlow, if I mistake not, conceals much penetration beneath a shy and unobservant manner. Whatever may be our own present feelings or future doom, let us but secure, by this most advantageous marriage, the happiness of our dear Mary, who is ardently attached to Evelyn Barlow, and we shall be so far independent of fate we shall not, at all events, have perpetrated crime in vain."

There was no hypocrisy in this speech. Mrs. Lomax, who really felt what she said. Benjamin was her darling child ; but her maternal feelings towards Mary, though sometimes interrupted, and never extended to her in the fair proportion, were not by any means obliterated ; and, notwithstanding the occasional harshness with which she had recently treated her, she admired the filial forbearance with

which she submitted to parental partiality and injustice. The father's morbid state of mind made him a party to this maltreatment ; but he both loved and respected his daughter, and his voice trembled with deep emotion, as he said, in reply to his wife's admonition : — “ Dear, dear Mary ! there is not a better girl breathing. It will, indeed, be a great consolation to know that the fatal deed has at least secured *her* happiness, and I would not for worlds do any thing that should blight her present prospects.”

“ Then moderate, I beseech you, your perilous potations, for, when you are overcome with wine, you know not what you say or do. Your rambling discourse must fill the minds of the servants, and, sometimes, I fear, of our visitants, with strange surmises, of which no one can foresee the consequences ; while your spectral dreams and night-walkings are more likely to be produced by the fumes of wine than by the misgivings of your conscience.

Command yourself; endeavour to correct weakness, if not for my sake and yours for that of our dear Mary, whose whole life may now be said to depend upon exercising a temporary command over failings."

"And I should be a greater wretch villain even than I am," said Lomax emphatically, "were I to entail misery upon myself by any indulgence or indiscretion which I have the power to control. Bear with me, and assist me, Jane, instead of irritating my weak temper by contemptuous taunts and upbraidings, and I will do my best. At times I have no command over my words or actions, is not always with drinking; and, if it were you should excuse an oblivion to which I often fly as a refuge from wretchedness."

"I will excuse all your past indiscretions if you will try to amend them in future."

"I will promise to make the attempt."

if you will only whisper in my ear, when I am drinking too freely, that our dear Mary's happiness is at stake, I think I shall have resolution enough to push the bottle from me."

To this determination Lomax adhered with an inflexibility that showed him still to possess an efficient command over himself, when he chose to exercise it; and the amended health, both of body and mind, that resulted from a strict temperance, not only enabled him to struggle better with his apprehensions during the day, but diminished the frequency of the hideous phantasms by which his repose at night had so often been disturbed. Unbroken sleep still further corroborating his faculties, enabled him to listen with complacency to the arguments of his wife, who now substituting conciliation and reasoning for menace and contempt, endeavoured most strenuously to convince him that all his fears and fancies were vain.

By this judicious treatment she succeeded in resuming her empire, and in soothing, for a moment, the terrors of a pusillanimous mind, and the stings of a guilty conscience. The prospect of Mary's advantageous establishment, and of the certain happiness that it would secure to her, operated as a welcome lulling Nepenthe on the perturbed spirit of both her parents, who, during the courtship that now ensued, enjoyed a respite that appeared a perfect Elysium, when contrasted with their previous alarm, exacerbation, and anguish.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Oh, Love! how are thy precious, sweetest moments  
Thus ever crossed, thus vexed with disappointment!"

Rowe.

For a few days, Mrs. Hunter had persisted, although with very mysterious and significant looks, in refusing to satisfy the inquiries of her son as to the donor of the hundred pounds, by which his liberation from prison had been so quickly and so unexpectedly effected; but, being from her natural simplicity and openness very ill calculated for concealments of any sort, she at length suffered her secret to ooze out. Had it been any other person, she might have hesitated, but Alfred, she argued,

was so particularly trustworthy, that she was sure even Miss Owen herself would not object to his knowing the whole affair, if it were divulged to him in strict confidence.

Thus fully justified, as she thought, in violating her promise, the good woman imparted to him the name of his benefactress, enlarging upon the handsome manner in which the boon had been conferred, as well as upon its important effects in screening him from the displeasure of Mr. Bryant, to whom his arrest remained unknown.

“And now, my dear Alfred,” continued the fond parent, “now that I am disburthening my bosom of its secrets, which I hate to keep there, because they are just like so many birds in a cage, fretting at their confinement, and longing to pop out and effect their escape, I must tell you of a discovery that I have made, and which I dare say you will be not a little surprised to hear.”

"I am all attention," said the son, "for I see by your countenance that it is of pleasant import, and to such tidings I am but seldom called to listen."

"No, indeed, my poor dear Alfred! you have nothing but annoyances and vexations to endure, and most sincerely do I wish—la! there's a spot of ink upon the frill of your new shirt! I wish you wouldn't hold your pen in your mouth. Dear! dear! where *did* I put my salt of lemons?"

"*My* vexations and annoyances, dear mother, are nothing, nothing whatever: I deserve them all. It is your privations and the sorrows of our dear pining Harriet that wring my heart, and, as I sometimes fear, have irritated and soured my temper."

"Bless me, Alfred! don't talk in that distressing way. I have no privations; I never was so happy in my life—nothing in the world to worry me, that is to say, just now,

for there is no rent coming due these two months ! Harriet will soon get over her low spirits, poor girl ! and as to your temper, every body says it is exactly like mine ; and whatever may be my other faults, I know myself to be so mild and gentle, that if any body else were to call you ill-natured, I could almost feel in my heart to scratch their eyes out."

" You have forgotten the secret that you were about to impart to me."

" Secret ! had I a secret ? well, I vow and declare I *had* almost forgotten all about it. Now, my dear Alfred, listen to me with all your ears." Here she drew her chair close to that of her son, took his hand, and, looking in his face, with an expression of arch and triumphant affection, continued— " Now that I have disclosed to you the name of your benefactress, tell me, can you or can you not give a shrewd guess at her motive for the gift ? "

"Assuredly I can. I presume her to have been actuated by a natural benevolence."

"A natural fiddlestick! Pooh, pooh! don't tell me. Generous she may be, but young ladies seldom bestow such large sums upon handsome and accomplished young men without—now don't start and look angry, dear Alfred; you can't deny that you *are* both handsome and accomplished—and young ladies, I repeat, seldom make such liberal donations without some feeling a *leetle* more warm and tender than mere bountifulness of disposition."

"Ridiculous! this is the creation of your own overweening fancy, and I must entreat that you will never give utterance to a thought which is alike painful to me, and disparaging to Miss Owen."

"Well, now, I call *that* ridiculous, if you please. I don't know why it should be painful to you, and I am sure it cannot be dis-

paraging to Miss Owen. Your family better than her's, though we are down in the world at present. You are a gentleman born and bred, and though——”

“Tush, madam! for Heaven's sake no more of this. You forget that Miss Owen is an heiress, and that I am degraded to a servile situation. Pray let us change the subject. Be assured that you have drawn a most erroneous conclusion from a single act of benevolence.”

“Don't tell me, Alfred; I know better—Ah! you should have seen her when I told her of your being arrested. She turned as pale as ashes, and panted for breath, and became so agitated, that I thought she would have gone into hysterics. Was *that* a simple feeling of charity? No, no; we women are not so easily to be deceived in one another's emotions. Having been in love myself, I know what it is—I remember, as well as if it were

only yesterday, when your poor dear father, who is now among the saints in heaven, was paying me his addresses, and fell from his horse, or rather the beast tumbled with him, for he was an excellent horseman, a friend called to tell me of the accident, and after desiring me to arm myself with all my fortitude, exclaimed, in a solemn voice——Look ! look ! Tabby has caught a mouse, I do declare !——nay, you shall not torment the poor creature.”

Up jumped the kind-hearted Mrs. Hunter, and, after declaring that, although these little pilferers were a sad plague to her, she could not bear to see them worried to death, she liberated the intended victim, which quickly made its escape, consoled Tabby for the loss by a lump of sugar, and was about to resume her story, when her son, who had often heard it before, assured her that her feelings upon the interesting occasion, to which she had

alluded, could not afford a faithful clue to those of Miss Owen, and implored her once more not to lend herself to a groundless delusion, which must wear an appearance of the vainest presumption, and the most inexcusable ingratitude, should it ever come to the knowledge of their benefactress.

“ Well, well,” said the mother, with a look of significant obstinacy, “ I am very willing to hold my tongue, but you cannot argue me out of my opinion. I will not refer to the subject, even in the remotest manner, since you desire me not ; but, say what you will, I am confident, and indeed I should wonder if it were otherwise, that a certain young lady who shall be nameless is in love with a certain young gentleman who shall be equally nameless.”

“ Gentleman ! ” exclaimed Alfred, smiling in bitter spirit. “ Are you alluding to Jacob Bryant’s Wharf-clerk ? ”

“ I am alluding to one who, let him fill what

situation he may, is every inch a gentleman, though I say it that shouldn't say it, and, therefore, you must not be seen with this ink-spot upon your frill. Ah ! I hope one of these days to see you restored to the rank of a gentleman, and conducting yourself as such, and then you will never, please God, have occasion to touch these nasty pens. Come along with me, and I will look for the salt of lemons. I do think I must have put it in the little drawer, under the beaufet, where I lock up the silver teapot and spoons — don't you, dear Alfred ? ”

“ I do not take up notions without some basis to support them,” replied the son, with a faint smile ; “ therefore, I must be excused from offering a guess on the subject.”

Notwithstanding the opinion he had thus confidently expressed, Hunter's demeanour towards Helen, influenced by a heartfelt gratitude for her recent generosity, uncon-

sciously assumed a more tender and deferent character than had hitherto been his wont. Never had he appeared to her to display his own talents to half so much advantage as when deriving an evident gratification from eliciting her's. he sat by her side, gazing upon her with a look of respectful homage, asking her opinion upon various points of literature and art, referring to her judgment, not with a servile acquiescence, but with the air of one who really grateful for being enlightened, or yielding himself heartily, when she indulged his vivacious sallies, to the influence of her sportive wit.

From any undue conceit Helen was as free as most girls, but she had the foibles and feelings of our common nature; and it was hardly, therefore, to be expected that she should be insensible to this most refined and delicate of all flattery, coming from a man of acknowledged talents, who had already made

a much deeper impression upon her heart than she herself suspected.

By the sedulity of his homage to Helen, Hunter in the mean time had succeeded in persuading Rose, whatever she might have once suspected to the contrary, that his admiration and his regards were now diverted from herself and exclusively engrossed by her friend. The humility which is ever the concomitant of real merit and genius prevented her from being in the smallest degree surprised at this conviction, although it could not entirely obviate the secret pang by which it was accompanied. Not only did it seem to her perfectly natural that the vivacity, accomplishments, and amiability, of her friend should eclipse her own poor attractions, fading away as they evidently were under the withering influence of melancholy and ill health; but she clearly perceived and readily acknowledged that the attachment which, if directed towards herself, scarcely admitted the possibility

of any satisfactory result, became sanctioned when Helen was its object, by every consideration of worldly prudence and discretion. Recollecting the birth, education, and personal recommendations of Hunter, she saw nothing whatever in his reduced circumstances that should deter him from aspiring to the hand of Helen ; indeed, there were innumerable motives, both in his own situation and in that of his family which must manifestly prompt him to desire that alliance. In the firm persuasion that its accomplishment would secure the happiness of two parties, to one of whom she owed a long debt of gratitude, while her heart was not less tenderly interested in the welfare of the other, the generous girl determined to devote her influence and good offices to the promotion of their union.

With all the perseverance of high principle, all the ardour of a generous and determined self-sacrifice, she struggled against her feelings,

her appearance every day exhibiting with greater obviousness the ravages of the contest in which she was engaged. It seemed as if this delicate and fragile creature, who, even in her healthier state, rather resembled a spirit than an inhabitant of earth, was now, indeed, about to assume an ethereal form, and to pass away into some new element better adapted to the purity of her mind, and the transparent tenuity of her frame.

Mrs. Hunter, with all her simplicity, had a maternal eye to the main chance where her son was concerned; and, as she retained her conviction of Helen's prepossession, she failed not to sing the praises of his domestic virtues, and to extenuate the peccadilloes into which he had been betrayed. Her regard for veracity, however, would not allow her to conceal the pecuniary difficulties in which he was perpetually involving them, an indiscretion which the good lady condemned and vindicated in the

same breath. They might be freed, as it appeared, from their present embarrassments by a trifling sum, which Helen instantly resolved to advance, though she hesitated to disclose her purpose, and could not immediately decide upon the mode of effecting it.

From a closer observation of Mrs. Hunter whose character, indeed, was almost as easy to be read as a printed book, she not only doubted her power to retain a secret, but began to apprehend that her own motives in the proposed donation were very likely to be misinterpreted. Had she said *detected*, she would, perhaps, have used more appropriate term. Not choosing to subject herself to any such *injurious* suspicion and afraid that she might be discovered by her hand-writing, should she transmit her gift in a cover addressed by herself, she finally concluded, after due cogitation, to avail herself of Rose's agency, as the most effectual mode for concealing the source of the gift. The venial

falsehood of writing within the envelope :—  
“ From an old friend of Mrs. Hunter’s family,”  
would probably direct the suspicions of that  
lady into some other quarter, and, if they  
were turned towards herself, it was easy,  
with the help of a little casuistry, to deny  
that she had either written or forwarded the  
letter.

Having formed this resolution, she hastened  
to Rose’s apartment, and, with a flush upon  
her features, which seemed to confirm the anger  
she had assumed, exclaimed, as she threw her-  
self into a chair :—“ Well ! I have no patience  
whatever with this extravagant, thoughtless,  
unfeeling Mr. Hunter. His conduct is really  
abominable, and deserves to be exposed. Were  
it the first, or even the second time, it might  
be overlooked, but these reiterated indiscretions  
are unpardonable, scandalous ! Surely he might  
remember the claims of his family, even if he  
chooses to forget what is due to himself.”

"Alas! what new offence has he committed?" demanded Rose eagerly, while her wan features reddened with apprehension.

"The worst species of new offence — the repetition of an old one for which he has already suffered. By his extravagance and misconduct, he has once more exposed his affectionate mother and amiable sister to embarrassments of the most humiliating nature."

"Ah, dear Helen! is it not some extenuation of his fault that he was born to independence? Nothing so difficult, especially for a young man, as to discard expensive habits, and suddenly practice a rigid thrift."

"Ridiculous! Sensible people will always adapt themselves to their circumstances; and there are thousands who maintain themselves and their families in decent comfort, upon a much narrower income than that of Mr. Hunter."

"Yes, but they have never known any better

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**state.** To them economy is no effort, because it is no novelty; it has been the practice of their whole life; but to Mr. Hunter it is a new and painful task, and one which it must be exceedingly difficult to perform when every recollection of the past tempts him to forget the present."

"At all events, Rose, it is an imperative duty, and you will not surely excuse its non-performance, when it involves the peace and respectability of a whole family. Oh! I have no patience with him! especially as I have good reason to suspect that his mother and sister often deny themselves comforts, that they may provide him little luxuries and indulgences. However, I came not hither to talk of Mr. Hunter, indeed I care not how rarely his name is mentioned, but to have a little chat with you about the old lady, whose painful condition I most sincerely commiserate, especially when I call to mind how trying and irk-

some it must be for one who has moved in a better sphere to be reduced in life, and obliged to contend with all the hardships of comparative poverty."

"You said, just now, that sensible people would always adapt themselves to their circumstances."

"I was speaking then of young men, whom the rough trials of life are a mere ~~p~~ time, and who ought to conform themselves to their station, however humble, without difficulty. With an elderly female the case is ~~v~~ different. Mrs. Hunter, nevertheless, is reconciled to her lowly lot, and never seems to regret it, except on the account of her undeserving son. She is a most estimable person; a kinder and more single-hearted woman I never knew; and poor Harriet, whose depression of spirits I can now well explain, is really a most intelligent and amiable girl. I cannot bear to see such deserving persons exposed to the annoyance of

duns for a mere trifle ; and I was thinking, therefore, my sweet little Rose de Meaux, of sending them, anonymously, of course, a sufficient sum to extricate them from their immediate difficulties."

"It was a thought worthy of yourself," said Rose, pressing her friend's hand to her heart, while she glowed with the pleasure that always thrilled her whole sensitive frame at the mention of any generous deed.

"Nay," resumed Helen, "you mean it would be utterly unworthy of me to act otherwise, the amount being so insignificant. I need not add that the transaction must remain a secret between you and me. From considerations of delicacy, I shall send the money anonymously, and, as my hand-writing is known to Mrs. Hunter, I wish you to direct the *envelope*, lest the good lady should attribute my interference to improper motives."

“To improper motives! By what means can she ——?”

“Psha! I meant to say erroneous. I would not wish — people are so apt —— constructions are very annoying — surely she can understand my feelings.”

“I believe I do,” said Rose with a smile; “and I will willingly lend my assistance to your benevolent views. It will be a great relief to poor Mr. Hunter’s mind that his family ——.”

“Oh! don’t mention *his* feelings! he deserves to be punished, were it ten times as much. Say no more about him, but come with me to my room, and I will instruct you to write on the inside of the cover.”

Here the conversation ended for the present, but enough had been said to convince Rose that, although Helen’s natural benevolence might have prompted her to assist the mother and daughter, her sympathies were

## CHAPTER VIII.

“The hearts of old gave hands ;

But now our heraldry is—hands, not hearts.”

OTHEL

10.

HOWEVER adroitly Rose might acquit herself of the little commission thus entrusted to her, she could not effectually succeed in hoodwinking Mrs. Hunter, whose penetration, not usually very keen, was quickened by her suspicion of Helen's latent attachment to her son.

In less than ten minutes after having received the last-mentioned letter, she bustled into the sitting-room at Eagle Wharf, her benevolent countenance radiant with surprise and complacency, as she exclaimed : “ Well, my

these words in a strange handwriting, 'From an old friend of Mrs. Hunter's family.' "

"Some one, doubtless, with whom you *have* been intimately acquainted in former *days*. Cannot you guess whence it comes?"

"La, dear, yes! I can *guess* fast enough," replied Mrs. Hunter, smiling significantly at her companion, who, in spite of her assumed nonchalance, again blushed as she hastily *claimed*—

"Moving in the sphere you formerly occupied, I dare say you must have known many friends both able and willing to confer upon you so trifling an act of courtesy."

"Why, that is likely enough, for I knew *at* least a dozen to whom I would gladly have shown such a kindness, supposing our circumstances to have been reversed; but, you see none of our former acquaintance know where to find us out, for Alfred cannot bear that any of them should see us in our present reduced

“ It is no trifle to me, my dear young lady whatever it might be to you. It comes, assure you, in the very nick of time, and whoever may be my benefactor or benefactress, don’t know which it is, I sincerely hope that Heaven will shower down—La! there is shower falling, I do declare, for the people yonder boat have got their umbrellas up, and I left mine at home! How could I be so careless, and my best bonnet too! It did spill a little just as I got to the Wharf, but I was hopes it had all blown over. However, I shall stay here till it’s fine, the rain may depend upon that! ”

The threatened danger of her bonnet not only drove out of the good lady’s head the completion of her prayer, but even the purport of her visit, to which she alluded no more, but sat watching and upbraiding the shower, with sundry exclamations of, “ Well, if ever! ” until she availed herself of a gleam

“Psha! don’t tell me,” resumed the mother, as she again bustled into the room—“it’s no use your denying the fact, and still less your desiring me never to allude to the subject, though I am very willing to avoid all mention of names. ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’ Only get courage enough, dear Alfred, to make the attempt, and I will answer for your success; and even if you fail, we are only where we were.”

“Pardon me, madam; we shall have forfeited the friendship of Miss Owen, and I shall have lost my situation at the Wharf, for Mrs. Bryant will hardly retain me after such an instance of presumption.”

“Presumption! I like that! You are of better blood, and much more of a gentleman than he or any of his family, and, if he chooses to take offence, let him take it. We can scarcely be worse off than we are already, for there is hardly a day passes that I am not

than by offering to devote his whole life to the happiness of the donor.

It was only when he acknowledged the feasibility of his mother's suggestions, and the inappreciable advantages which his family would derive from the successful prosecution of his addresses to Helen, that Hunter felt the full difficulty of his situation. Vain was the hope with which he had flattered himself that he had conquered, or at least weakened, the force of his ill-fated passion for Rose Mayhew. That struggle was now to be fought afresh, and with an increased painfulness, for he loved her with a tenderer and more ineradicable affection, now that he was about to incur the risk of losing her for ever.

That his attachment was still reciprocated by Rose, notwithstanding the late avoidance of each other's society, which both seemed to have adopted from the same sense of duty and propriety, he had but too much reason for be-

Circumstances soon compelled the decision ~~that~~ ~~his own~~ energies seemed unable to form. ~~Holloway~~, the young man to whom his sister ~~Hunter~~ had been betrothed, and whose parents ~~would not consent~~ to the marriage because her ~~fortune~~ had been dissipated by her brother, ~~arrived~~ in London at this period, and instantly perceived the probable success that would attend his own suit, if that of Hunter were pushed to a prosperous issue. A new and delightful hope springing up in his bosom, he sought an interview with Alfred, and, frankly stating the information which he had received as to Helen's property, and the presumed state of her affections, asked him why he refused to avail himself of the glorious opportunity for redeeming the fortunes of his family, which fate was ready to throw into his hands, if he would only grasp it.

"Poor, and utterly dependent as I am at present," said Holloway, "it would be a proof

any thing that might compromise other parties. I have demanded of my father and of my employers, whether, in the event of your marrying a woman of fortune, the former would withdraw his objections to my union with Harriet and the latter would receive me as a partner. In their answers they accede, as you will see to my wishes ; and I appeal to yourself whether I have not some right to expect that you should at least make an attempt to realize all these visions of happiness."

"Oh ! you have, doubtless, a right, an abundant right," cried Hunter, walking up and down the room in a hurried and agitated manner ; "and, when there is a chance of effecting so much for my dear mother, for Harriet, and for yourself, I am a wretch to suffer any considerations of my own probable misery——."

"Misery !" interposed Holloway ; "how can you be rendered miserable by conferring hap-

piness upon all your friends? Is there any thing saddening in the prospect of enjoying the pleasures of comparative affluence, in the society of a wife who, if I have been rightly informed, is amiable, accomplished, and attractive?"

"She is; she is every thing that you have been told, and yet I had a thousand times rather —, but no, no, no! Wretched and heart-broken I may be, but I will not be a villain; I will sacrifice myself for the sake of —. Tell me, did Harriet urge you to make this application?"

"No, indeed; she has refrained, as she tells me, from ever mentioning the subject to you, although frequently solicited to do so by her mother, lest you should be prompted by your brotherly affection to put a violence upon your own inclinations."

"Generous, kind-hearted girl! I half suspected as much. Had she reproached me, as

she was so well entitled to do, methinks I have borne it ; but her meek heroism, her complaining sorrow, her undiminished affections, and delicate consideration — these, the irresistible. I cannot, will not, any longer bear the sight of her waning health, and of her efforts to conceal from me the sad progress of her spirits. Holloway ! you have consented — I submit. I will be the martyr ; you and Harriet shall be happy ; but you must give me a day or two to consider how I may accomplish your wishes with the greatest probability of success, for, in my present perturbed state of mind, I can neither act nor think as I ought to do. Farewell ! I will see you to-morrow.

So saying, he hurried out of the room waiting the reply of his companion, who was anxious to learn how his union with a young and agreeable heiress could possibly be considered a martyrdom, or be viewed with an inexplicable repugnance.

On the morrow a new and painful occurrence confirmed the wavering resolution of Hunter. One of his mother's creditor's, after having long foregone his claim for an old debt, put an execution in the house, and seized the few articles of value which she had saved out of the wreck of her fortunes. These relics were less appreciated for their intrinsic worth, than for the associations connected with them. One had been the gift of her husband before their marriage, another had belonged to her father, a third was a present from a deceased friend : all had been preserved, under the most pressing difficulties, with a fond tenacity, and all were endeared to her by their awakening a thousand reminiscences of pleasant days now passed away, but not, as she trusted, for ever, for she clung to the superstitious hope that they might eventually return, so long as she was surrounded by these cherished memorials.

There was a charm about them, that seemed

my heart-strings, when you know that you have the power of preventing it?"

The unfortunate son, surveying the scene before him with the stupor of a calm despair, without daring to look her in her face, turned his regards upon his sister, who said nothing, but whose eyes, suffused with tears, seemed, for the first time, to convey an expression of reproach.

Meek and subdued as was this silent appeal, it went to the very heart of her brother, who in vain attempted to conceal his emotions as he held out a hand to each, and exclaimed in a broken voice:—"Mother! Harriet! be comforted; you shall have no further cause to complain of me. I have already promised our good friend Holloway that I would comply with all your wishes, and Heaven grant that we may none of us be disappointed in the result! As to this execution upon our goods and chattels, it shall, at all events, be removed for the pre-

sent. Our creditor, who is a humane man, will not refuse to grant us a few days' respite, when he is apprized that a short delay may enable us to satisfy his claim. I will see him instantly, and get this unwelcome visitant, who is so unconcernedly taking an inventory of our effects, shortly expelled from our apartments."

For this purpose he hastened from the room, which he had no sooner quitted than his sister, who had partially restrained her feelings in his presence, gave a free vent to her tears, and sobbed aloud; while the mother, crying and laughing at the same moment, and totally regardless of the sheriff's-officer, who stared at her with amazement, affectionately kissed her favourite articles of furniture, congratulating them, as if they had been rational beings, on the probability that the menaced separation would now be prevented, and that they might continue together as happily as heretofore.

with so fastidious a hesitation ; and as to the scruples that have hitherto deterred me, to what do they amount ? I give my hand to one woman, while my heart is in possession of—— Heigho ! no more, no more—for ‘that way madness lies !’ Well, I put a violence upon my feelings ; I stifle my unhappy passion for one whom it would be a folly, as well as a selfish cruelty, to marry ; I espouse Miss Owen — I solemnly swear to love, honour, and cherish her, and I will sacredly perform my vow. Religion, gratitude, duty, will impel me to redeem my pledge ; and if I know any thing of myself they will never appeal to me in vain. Heedless, foolish, extravagant, I may have been ; but unprincipled I am not, nor ever was. And how many men daily present themselves at the marriage altar, subsequently to become happy and devoted husbands, whose affections, at the moment, were in the same predicament as my own. Love is, perhaps, more likely to be the

vive, however vigorously it may have existed before wedlock. A short indifference, leading to a durable and rational attachment, is much better than the brief honeymoon of passion, which is so often extinguished in a long and cheerless night of alienation.

“Yes, yes—mine will be the more prudent choice, and who shall henceforward charge me with recklessness or improvidence? Were it otherwise, indeed, I must submit to my fate. I have no right to enter into calculations upon the subject, as if I were a free agent. Not for myself, Heaven knows! but for others, am I about to become a happy—Ha! ha—happy! well, let that pass. Enough for me, even should I entail wretchedness upon myself, that I shall confer happiness upon my dear mother, upon Harriet, upon Holloway. Not even for them, however, can I screw up my courage to a personal interview with Miss Owen, nor do I well know how I shall shape my saucy

proposal, even with the aid of pen and paper."

With an impetuosity that seemed to distrust its own purpose if it were allowed to cool, he seized the writing materials, and instead of the "Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise, and three-piled hyperboles," which usually characterize a love letter, hastily dashed off the following.

"Did I not believe the condescension and kindness of Miss Owen to be at least equal to her talents and accomplishments, I could never summon courage to urge the proposal which I am now about to submit to her consideration—perhaps, I should rather say, to her forgiveness. Even with this conviction upon my mind, I hesitate to make the daring avowal which—but it is useless to delay, it is impossible any longer to suppress it. Have pity upon me, I beseech you, and believe me when I affirm, that however my present boldness may savour of pre-

sumption and arrogance, my feelings towards you, be your decision favourable or adverse, must unalterably be those of the profoundest respect and gratitude.

“ You found me here in the menial, the degrading, situation of wharf clerk to your uncle, an occupation to which I honestly confess my utter repugnance ; although I have endeavoured to discharge its duties as well as a revolted and unhappy mind would allow me. Notwithstanding this disparity in our circumstances, you favoured me with your notice, you suffered me to share your society, perhaps it is not too much to add that you honoured me with your friendship. Once more forgive me if this be a vain and overweening conclusion, for my feelings are excited, almost to bewilderment, and I scarcely know what I write. You gave me reason, at all events, to believe that my society was not altogether displeasing to you, and poor as it is, this is the only excuse I can

assign, for raising my aspiring thoughts to a still higher distinction, and daring to solicit the honour of your hand in marriage.

“The word is written. I have passed the Rubicon—my fate is at your disposal. Reject me if you will, but do not upbraid me, do not hate me, do not increase the sufferings of a heart already wrung with sorrow and remorse; and suffer me to add in extenuation of my audacity, that by birth, by education, and, I trust, by the honourable feelings which confer its best dignity upon the character, I presume to call myself a gentleman. Should you, in allowing my claim to that distinction, consider yourself warranted in granting my suit, you will have a much better security than any that I could offer by oaths and protestations for my conscientious, grateful, and lifelong devotion to your happiness.

“You have a right, however, to be satisfied upon one point. Fear not, in the event of your

rejecting me, (alas ! it is but too p  
contingency,) that I shall embarrass y  
continued presence at the Wharf.  
mind is made up. In that case, I sh  
diately embark with my mother and  
Canada, where we have a relation  
promised to assist my efforts for the re  
of our fallen fortunes. That count  
ment as it is, may, perhaps, be kin  
than the land of my birth, and I may t  
the peace and prosperity which in  
will ever, as I fear, be denied to the  
the disappointed, and the unhappy

“ALFRED HUI

Helen, who was sitting at work w  
when she received this epistle, was  
and vehemently affected during its  
Although she had believed for some t  
that the affections of the writer were  
gether uninterested in his pointed a  
mitting attentions, she had neither an

so immediate a declaration, nor that it would be made in writing. The agitation of her surprised feelings, the tender delight that thrilled through her heaving bosom, and deeply suffused her features, revealed to her, for the first time, the depth and the intensity of her attachment. She drew two or three gasping inspirations, and then, laying her trembling hand upon the shoulder of her companion, exclaimed in a broken voice, "Open the window, my dear Rose. I am a little overcome, but I shall be better presently. Such a strange—such an unexpected—but with you I can have no secrets, my more than sister, my best of friends! My happiness is your's, and your's is mine. And yet I should like to keep you a while in suspense, for you would never, never guess the contents of this letter."

"Pardon me," replied Rose, endeavouring to look arch and smiling, although the blood had fled from her cheeks, and even from her

lips— “The letter is from Mr. Hunter, and it contains an offer of his hand.”

“Amazing ! did he then acquaint you with his intentions ? ”

“No, indeed ; he has scarcely spoken to me for many weeks past ; but I have long discovered his secret, I recognized his handwriting in the superscription, and your eloquent countenance told me all the rest. I read your features, which was quite equal to a perusal of your letter.”

“Positively, my dear little Rose *de Meaur*, you almost make me afraid of you. It is dangerous to be in your society, for your eyes are like the spear of Ithuriel, and your acute penetration rather resembles that of a spirit, than of a creature of the earth. At this very moment I believe you are acquainted with my inmost thoughts.”

“I suspect that I am, nor would your silence prevent me, for your face is a dial which,

although it be voiceless, reveals what is passing within it."

"That you are a sorceress I will not affirm, but I know you to be an enchantress; and as I suspect that you could divine, if you wished it, every word of this letter, my putting it into your hands is no great proof of confidence towards you, nor any violation of it towards the writer."

With these words, which she had uttered in a tone of *nonchalance* little in accordance with her real feelings, she delivered the letter to her companion, and leaning over her shoulder began to read it over again, her first agitated perusal having left upon her mind only a general impression of its contents. This process she had scarcely commenced, when it was interrupted by her somewhat petulant exclamation of—"For Heaven's sake, Rose, do hold the paper a little more steadily; your hand shakes so, that it is impossible to read a line; and

indeed you tremble all over, like an aspen leaf."

Her friend, whose lightning glance, whenever she was reading, always outstripped the quickest eyes of others, paid no attention to this remark, but rapidly turned over the paper, and had just reached the signature, when an unbidden and unconscious tear fell upon the extended arm of her companion.

"My sweet little Mimosa!" exclaimed the latter, tenderly embracing her, "I am gratified more than I can express, by this touching proof of your sympathy, but you must not indulge such an intensity of feeling. You are a thousand times more agitated than I am myself; one would really imagine that the letter was addressed to you, not to me."

Rose attempted to gasp a reply, but her words were choked by sobs; and her feelings now becoming utterly irrepressible, she buried her head in the bosom of her friend, and burst

into a passionate flood of tears. It was but a short paroxysm, for she presently raised up her sylph-like form, and making an effort to conquer her emotion, though the dark fringes of her downcast eyes were still bedewed with tears, she said in a low, tremulous voice—

“Forgive me, dear Helen; I have always been foolishly sensitive, as you well know; and since this tedious illness I am subject to a morbid nervousness which, at times, completely overcomes me. You were kind enough to say just now, that my happiness was your’s, and most truly can I affirm that your’s is mine. It was this thought, and the prospect of the certain felicity opening upon you from your union with—in short, my feelings got the better of me; but I am calm now, quite collected, and can thank you for your confidence in showing me this letter, which has made me very, very—happy.”

The last lingering word was scarcely audible,

and the poor girl was fain to affect a cough in order to conceal her returning emotion.

“My sweet little trembler!” cried her friend, pressing her affectionately to her bosom—“you must really, I repeat, check this acute sensibility—or it will shake to pieces your fragile and attenuated frame.”

“If I thought so, I would rather encourage than repress it,” sighed Rose.

“Nay, nay, you shall not give way to melancholy on so pleasant an occasion as my receiving an offer of marriage. I will not ask you what you think of his letter, for you can scarcely have read it in the moment that your eyes flitted over the lines.”

“I could repeat every word of it.”

“You are a wonderful and gifted creature, but, as I possess no such intuitive and supernatural insight, and still less so retentive a memory, you must allow me a second perusal of this impertinent epistle.”

**So** saying, she took it from the hand of her friend, and after having read it deliberately over, suddenly exclaimed, "This a love-letter ! why, there is no such word as 'love' in the whole composition. It seems to have been drawn up by a lawyer — formal as an apprentice's indenture, and cold as a magistrate's mittimus. Cupid's flames have no effect upon my unflammable suitor: he remains as cool as a cucumber. Here are respect, and gratitude, and friendship, and conscientious discharge of his duty, and so forth, but not the smallest mention of admiration and attachment, not a single passing compliment—Heaven save the mark !—to my irresistible attractions, not a solitary phrase that savours of a lover's ardour and devotion. ' Was ever woman in such fashion woo'd ? was ever woman in such fashion won ? ' "

"He tells you that his feelings are excited

almost to bewilderment—that he scarcely knows what he writes.”

“Love, at all events, does not seem to be responsible for his emotion, for there is not an atom of passion in this hasty scrawl. It contains a proposal of marriage, indeed, but for aught that appears to the contrary, the writer might be in love with another woman.”

“Do you think so?” sighed Rose, while her heart palpitated vehemently, and the returning blood suddenly reddened her face and forehead. “Surely, surely, the offer of his hand sufficiently shows the real state of his affections.”

“It might, dear Rose, if men never gave the hand without the heart; but is it not just possible that this unimpassioned suitor, like Marmontel’s *Philosophe Soi-disant*, may be simply smitten by the sparkling eyes of my money-box?”

“Mr. Hunter is incapable of any thing

sordid and ungenerous ; that he should be base or unprincipled is impossible, quite impossible. I believe him to possess every good quality that can render him worthy to be the husband, even of my noble-minded Helen, and I know not how I could pronounce a higher eulogy."

"Heyday ! what a zealous and animated advocate have you suddenly become ! Would you then seriously and deliberately recommend me to marry the creature ? "

"I would, I would ; and if you act upon my most strenuous advice, I can almost stake my existence that you will never, never, have reason to repent your choice."

"Have you forgotten all the faults and bad qualities that we have observed in him ourselves, or have heard imputed to him by others ? Let me recapitulate them. Imprudence — extravagance — speculation — gambling — irritability — capriciousness — pride — inattention to business ; to which goodly list we must add,

on the authority of Mrs. Skinner, irreligion,  
a proneness to low company and to deep po-  
tations."

"As he has triumphantly refuted the first of  
that woman's vile calumnies, I totally dis-  
believe the others; and as to the little indi-  
cretions that we ourselves have remarked, to  
what do they amount? Who is perfect—what  
man is faultless, which of us is impeccable?  
O Helen, Helen, do not trifle on a subject so  
solemn and important as this. Do not, from  
fastidiousness or caprice, throw away the chan-  
ce, the certainty, of a happiness which the first  
woman in the land might justly envy you. To  
Mr. Hunter's failings I am by no means blind.  
He wants the strength of mind that should  
reconcile him to the fallen fortunes, not of him-  
self, but of his mother and his sister, of  
whose reverses he feels himself to have been  
the unintentional author. But by how many  
noble and exalted qualities are his infirmities

ed ! Religious, in the highest sense of  
rd ; gentle, generous, and affectionate,  
sesses, in an eminent degree, every  
ishment calculated to bless and adorn  
ic life."

avo ! " cried Helen. " Take breath, and  
know when you have come to the end of  
anegyric."

nd the pride to which you have objected,"  
ued Rose, " what is it but the natural  
of poverty and disappointment, acting  
high spirit conscious of its own dig-  
what is it but the excusable jealousy of  
leman, only the more anxious to uphold  
sonal, because he has lost his pecuniary,  
ndence. The sense of his birthright is  
ually struggling with his sense of the  
s of fortune ; and he wants, as I have  
f admitted, the fortitude and resignation  
ould enable him to maintain this painful  
t. But Helen, dearest Helen ! you will

self away, in order to prevent Mr. Hunter from doing the same? Lud, child! would you hurry me into a marriage of compassion with a poor, proud, decayed gentleman, without once inquiring the state of my affections?"

"*That* I had already ascertained. Ah, Helen! you cannot deceive me; I have long since penetrated into your heart and discovered its secret. In spite of Mr. Hunter's little imperfections, you think of him favourably, highly, fondly, and that conscious blush betrays that I have read you right."

"Ridiculous! you are quick-sighted, I confess; but you must not mistake fancy for intuition, and indulge in such groundless reveries about my affections. If I have any regard for him, of which I am not quite sure, I may safely say with Beatrice that I love him 'no more than reason;' and as to my leaving him to perish, you forget how my haughty gentleman has provided beforehand against my

rejection of his suit, by telling me that he has secured an asylum in Canada."

"An Elysium in the wilderness—a Paradise in the desert. Have you the heart, Helen, to condemn a highly cultivated and intellectual mind like his, formed to be the ornament of polished society, to a life of solitude and degrading drudgery, amid the snows and forests of North America? Would you expose his aged mother, and our poor, delicate, sinking Harriet, to the miseries of exile and the rigours of an inhospitable climate?"

Protesting her anxiety to save them from this fate, Helen contended that their expatriation was by no means an inevitable alternative as Hunter, if he possessed the various talents for which his eulogist gave him credit, ought to be well able to maintain his family in his own country. With the true selfishness and cunning of love she then proceeded to urge other, and even imaginary, objections against

him, for the mere pleasure of hearing them refuted by Rose, who pleaded his cause with a continued enthusiasm of which the effects were manifest in her glowing cheeks, her sparkling eyes, and the animation of her countenance. The result of this controversy, which was prolonged till the evening, was a tardy confession, on the part of Helen, that she should be disposed to think favourably of Hunter's suit, provided he could clear up certain imputations upon his character, which had not hitherto been satisfactorily disproved to her own mind, however they might be discredited by Rose. For this purpose she resolved to grant him an interview, and to demand full explanations upon every point that still remained subject to the smallest doubt.

Scarcely had the friends arrived at this conclusion, when the door was suddenly opened, and Mrs. Skinner hurried into the room, her eyes gleaming with a malignant exultation, as

she exclaimed, " Well, Miss Owen, well, Miss Mayhew ; I am so glad I found you at home. You would not believe me when I told you of Mr. Hunter's profligate goings-on. You said they were gross and scandalous inventions. Not that the stories originated with me, for if there is one thing upon earth that I abominate more than another, it is tattling and detraction. ' Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer,' saith the holy Scripture, and Heaven knows I am the last person to disobey the divine precept. I never listen to the gossip of my backbiting neighbours, whom I acknowledge to be a very bad set ; but one cannot shut one's eyes, and seeing, you know, Miss Owen, is believing, Miss Owen. I told you what I had heard from others — that Mr. Hunter was a confirmed tippler. Well, I met him just now in Tooley Street ; and, perceiving by his look, his manner, and his walk, that he had been indulging too freely in the bottle, I turned

round and followed him to the counting-house, when he got into an instant quarrel with his benefactor, good Mr. Bryant, loaded him with abuse, and is at this moment tossing the books about the place in a state of filthy intoxication."

"Impossible!" was the simultaneous exclamation of both her auditors.

"Ay, I thought you would say so, that is always the way. Hark! methinks I hear him brawling on the Wharf, and you will, perhaps, trust the evidence of your own eyes. Ha! there he is. What say you now?"

At these words, Helen and Rose looked out of the open window. The setting sun, as if to make atonement for the rarity of its visits, shone with an unusual brilliancy over the Wharf, towards the centre of which they beheld Hunter, seated upon a tall hogshead, and brandishing a long counting-house ruler, with all the ridiculous gesticulations of ebriety.

His hat was off, his profuse locks were disordered, and the bright rays of the sun imparted an additional redness to his flushed features. An air of happy triumph animated his countenance, and his voice, though elevated was neither harsh nor menacing as he exclaimed—

“Once more, Jacob Bryant, I warn thee as thy peril not to approach me, for no longer will I be thy bondsman, thy galley-slave. Long will I no longer carry for thee, but I will espouse the fair Miranda, and become the monarch of an enchanted island. Behold I am a king already ; I am seated on my throne ; this is my royal sceptre ; and as for my golden crown, I will wreath my brows with a sunbeam, until my locks become glorious as those of Apollo. Avaunt, Jacob ! I defy thee. No worthy art thou to be primate of the Fishmongers’ Company, for thine eyes and thy very looks are fishy. Approach not, therefore:

my magic wand, lest I metamorphose thee into a Nereid, like Glaucus, or whisk thee down the river, riding, like Arion, on a dolphin's back."

The only answer to this effusion was a horse-laugh from his fellow clerk, who stood holding his sides at the counting-house door, and could not restrain his risible propensities at the thought of the grave and corpulent Mr. Bryant bestriding a fish, instead of his sturdy brown cub, Factotum.

"I smell pitch," resumed Hunter with a look of ineffable disdain. "Hemp and flax, tar, turpentine, and tallow, are an abomination to my nostrils. Into the river let them forth-with be tossed, together with their containing casks and carboys. Faugh! an ounce of civet, good Mr. Apothecary, to sweeten my imagination."

An exclamation from Mrs. Skinner occasioned him for the first time to look up at the

window; but, instead of being daunted into silence by the sight of Helen and Rose, who stood gazing at him in a transfixed amazement, he leaped to the ground, fell upon one knee, extended both his arms, and cried out in an impassioned tone—

“ ‘ But soft ! what light through yonder window breaks !  
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun !  
It is my lady ! Oh ! it is my love.  
Oh ! that she knew she were !  
O speak to me, bright angel ! for thou art  
Glorious as is a messenger of Heaven,  
Unto the white upturned wondering eyes  
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,  
When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,  
And sails upon the bosom of the air.’ ”

“ Thou peerless paragon ! thou for whom  
I have so long sighed in secret ! thou who wilt  
for ever sit enthroned in my heart, why should  
I not proclaim my love for thee ? What are  
fate, fortune, poverty, or death ? Give me but  
thee, and I defy them all ! ”

Helen, who, after the letter of the morning,

naturally considered this passionate effusion to be addressed to herself, withdrew hastily from the window, blushing deeply, and her bosom heaving with agitation as she hurried to her own room, murmuring, "Shameful! shameful! Any thing else I could have forgiven; but public brawling, daylight intoxication! such open disgrace! I have done with him—I abandon him to his fate—I discard him utterly and for ever!"

Still more agonizing were the feelings of Rose. Her keener and infallible perceptions had detected that Hunter's eyes had been all along intently riveted upon her's, leaving it impossible for her to doubt that he had been apostrophizing herself and not her friend. In the evident confusion of his mind, he might, indeed, have mistaken the object of his adoration; but it was much more probable that intoxication, a proverbial divulger of truth, had betrayed the secret of his heart; and that,

although he was paying his addresses to Helen, he was in reality enamoured of herself. The conflict of feeling occasioned by this suspicion being more than her debilitated frame could support, she sank upon the sofa in a state of insensibility; while Mrs. Skinner, regretting her inability to afford her any succour, as she was engaged to attend a missionary meeting, quitted the room, and despatched a maid servant to her assistance.

## CHAPTER X.

"Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth; pray you keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; on a thought  
He will be well again."

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN we quitted Cypress House and the Lomax family, the latter were enjoying a comparative peacefulness to which they had long been strangers. Happy in the devoted homage of a lover, whose good qualities developed themselves the more copiously as their intimacy increased, Mary, fully reciprocating his attachment, gave free vent to a temperament which was not the less ardent and affectionate, because it was veiled beneath an exterior of habitual sedateness. Her present enjoyment of exist-

ence, enhanced by its novelty, as well as her delight at the unusual calmness and composure of her parents, imparted, for the first time, a rare expression of cheerfulness to her features, and animated her whole deportment with a character of exhilaration, which was sustained and increased by the frequent visits, and congratulations, and vivacious sallies, of her friend, Helen Owen.

Lomax, whose more cheerful, or rather less desponding mood, was manifested in his increased hospitality, took refuge from the fatigue of his often-repeated dinner parties. From the banquets, in which the host justly vaunted the variety of his rare wines, Jasper Pissidom seldom absent.

Though disappointed at not having come to the hand, or rather the fortune, of Miss Lomax, that feast-smelling worthy saw no reason ever for abandoning a mansion which afforded forth the temptation of such frequent

sumptuous entertainments. Epicure as he was, he rarely indulged his gastronomic propensities at his own cost, and, therefore, set a double value upon gratuitous treats; while other, though not less selfish, motives attracted him to Cypress House. A proficient in almost every game upon the cards, which he had cultivated, not as an amusement, but as a means of profit, he contrived to draw from that source a small, but certain revenue, as he invariably retired from the contest when he found himself pitted against a more skilful adversary, or encountering a run of ill luck.

Lomax, inexpert and yet persevering, because he delighted in any excitement that drew him from his own thoughts, would play piquet with his guest during the greater part of the night, generally losing, and never seeming to regret his ill-fortune. With an apparent, and yet intelligible inconsistency, he at once loved and despised the wealth which he had so

fraudulently obtained, cherishing it as the means of supplying his luxuries, and of procuring him a certain ostensible respect, while he viewed it with disdain since he had discovered its utter insufficiency to secure him safety, health, the real friendship of others, or his own peace of mind.

Among the guests invited to one of these costly dinners, was Captain Bryant, the heir-apparent of Eagle Wharf, and the commander of the Charming Kitty, which vessel had just arrived in the river from a long voyage. The vulgarity that he inherited from both his parents, being in some degree warranted by the rough manners and free and easy deportment for which the sailor claims a professional license, there was something rather pleasing & than offensive in his frank and natural demeanour, unpolished as it was.

Perfectly at home when introduced to a numerous assemblage at Cypress House, many of

whom he had never seen before, he saluted the strangers with a good-humoured nod, while his acquaintance had to endure the ordeal of an iron hand, which, in the severity of its kindness, rather crushed than clasped the fingers it imprisoned :—" Glad to see ye, glad to see ye," was his bluff exclamation to the former, " though I never clapped eyes on ye before. We shall wet our whistles together for the first time to-day, but I dare say it won't be the last, for, once a messmate, is always a messmate with Ambrose Bryant, if we have only tossed off a single bowl of grog together. Beg pardon, ladies ! I suppose I ought to talk of nothing but French wines and foreign kickshaws in such a grand room as this. Why, old Cypress House is so transmogrified that I scarcely know it again. Mercy on us ! what rare curtains and cornices ! crimson studding sails with gilt booms ; and, as for looking-glasses, a fellow may see himself in

half a dozen different directions at once, and yet only clap eyes on a single Tom Fool after all. Ask pardon, comrades, I am only speaking for one Ambrose Bryant."

"The furnishing of this drawing-room," said Lomax with an air of pomposity, "cost me some hundreds of pounds, and, therefore, it ought to be handsome. All the materials are of the very best quality; I desired particularly that no cost should be spared; do you admire the taste of the embellishments?"

"No; they are too much like the gilt gingerbread shops at Bartlemy fair. But, I am no judge of these matters, and, besides, I have no taste for any thing just now except for dinner. It smells so savoury that my fingers itch to be at it with the knife and fork. Are we waiting for any body?"

"I believe we are all assembled, with the exception of Mr. Pike."

"What! is Pike coming? Umbrella Pike,

**the** old beau, as I used to call him, the chap **that** ~~was~~ always tumbling into scrapes from his **over-anxiety** to keep out of them? Psha! **never** wait for him, man! Do n't spoil a good **dinner** for such a good-for-nothing prig as **that.**"

"**It** is very little beyond the time," observed **the lady** of the house, and it would look so **rude** to sit down to dinner without him."

"**It's** just ten times ruder to keep ten hungry **people** waiting, only to choke them after all **with** victuals boiled and roasted to rags. Beg **pardon**, Mrs. Lomax; I am sure I need n't ask it from any of our sharp-set messmates, here, **but** with your permission, I'll ring the bell, that **you** may order those jack-a-dandy fellows with **the** long bobs at their shoulders to dish up. **Lay** all the fault upon me—I know the value of **master Jasper Pike.**"

Of this the speaker gave a practical illustration by snapping his fingers with a most

expressive look of contempt, while the majority of the party corroborated his opinion by various disparaging reflections on the selfishness, cowardice, finical smartness, and affected juvenility, of the expected visiter.

“Whatever we subtract from Mr. Pike’s good qualities,” said Mary, “we ought to add to the talent which enables him, with so few personal recommendations, to become so frequent a guest, both here and at Eagle Wharf.”

“Confound the fellow!” cried the captain, “he would spell for a dinner, even if he didn’t know his alphabet. Besides, he once recommended to my father a speculation in hemp, by which he made a few hundred pounds, and always comes provided with some new suggestion of the sort, when he wants to have a cut at our mutton, taking good care to call when it is nearly roasted.”

“I have a shrewd suspicion,” resumed Mary, “that we all of us like to have a sort of

coat among our acquaintance ; one who had enough to disgrace us, and yet sufficiently unamiable to flatter our self-love, by getting us to say to ourselves, and to one another, ‘I thank Heaven that I am not like a republican.’ ”

“Don’t tell what others may feel,” replied Barlow, “but, for my own part, I shouldn’t consider any great compliment to myself to say I was n’t any such a niggardly, selfish, hypocritical chap as old Pike.”

“Oh ! he is not old,” observed Lomax, a remark which was echoed by the senior Barlow ; both being themselves somewhat advanced in years, began to speak of middle-aged as youngsters. “Nor is he by any means without his good qualities,” continued Lomax ; “he plays an excellent hand at cards,”

“and he is a capital judge of port-wine,” said Barlow, who piqued himself upon

the skill with which he had stocked his capacious cellars.

"Ay, ay, I can understand all that," said Bryant; "he always puffs the wine, that he may have an excuse for drinking more of it, and be asked a second time to dinner. There are many red-nosed old chaps, my father for one, who had much rather that you should praise their port than themselves."

"Allow me to inform you, Captain Bryant," said the elder Barlow, with a grave look, "that a man may have a red-nose without being in the smallest degree intemperate."

"To be sure he may, for I know you hold two or three bottles a day to be no intemperance. Come, come, neighbour, don't look glum. I owe you a good turn for the way in which you coppered and repaired the *Charming Kitty*. A better sea-boat never left the *Thames*."

"She will surely require docking, *again*, after so long a voyage," observed the *ship*

builder, who never lost sight of the main chance.

“Why, ay, after getting ashore at Rio, she will want a little overhauling, and I shall warp her down to your dock as soon as I get her cargo out.”

“My good fellow,” cried Barlow, holding out his hand, though not without an anticipatory wince, “how could you imagine that I looked glum at you? Such an old friend, too, as honest Ambrose Bryant! The lower dock, which is now empty, will do for her famously, and we had better have her in before she is visited by the inspectors of Lloyd’s, or she may lose her class in the register-books.”

The announcement of dinner put an end to this conversation; and the guests being marshalled two and two, proceeded to the dining-room, taking precedence according to their presumed wealth, the citizens’ patent of nobility. With the exception of Evelyn and Mary, for

Benjamin was not well enough to, the whole assemblage were a good cheer, so that, after having of admiration at the splendid at the table, they betook themselves to the serious discussion of the feast.

Hushed was the human voice in a few exclamatory eulogia up and viands, while the clattering forks, and the smacking of lips alacrity with which every combat his part in the general demolition. Already had the fish and soup and an attack was about to commence on substantial joints, when the door open, and Pike swung into the room on his toes with his usual jaunter, perking up his chin as he exclaimed a thousand apologies, Mrs. Loma: all! Ever your devoted slave.

gentlemen, I have the honour to salute you, as they say in France. Ha ! a chair left me. I see : better late than never. I am glad you sate down without me ; we single young fellows should never be waited for."

"Young!" cried Captain Bryant. "Ha ! ha ! why, you were a single young fellow when I first went to school."

"In general, you are remarkably punctual," said Mrs. Lomax. "I have never yet known you to be wanting after the dinner-hour had struck."

"I have," said the captain ; "once when engaged to a public dinner where he was to have paid his quota, upon which occasion he never showed up at all."

"Nay, now, I protest — I appeal — this is unfair, when it is notorious that upon the day in question I was very seriously indisposed."

"Ay, very seriously indisposed to come down with the cash : I believe you there. Ha ! ha !"

“I cannot reply to you now; we do not start fair, for I have all the lost ground of my fish and soup to recover. Let me come up with you, and then I shall be ready for a sparring-match with you or any body. Capital dinner — a prime spread, upon my honour! I shall soon overtake you, captain, for I believe few fellows possess a better set of grinders. He, he, he!”

Having renewed his laugh, merely for the purpose of displaying his teeth, of which he was not a little vain, he plied his knife and fork with such diligence, that he quickly placed himself upon a par with the other guests, when he whispered to his right-hand neighbour:—“Not sorry, after all, to be a little late, for these good people are terribly apt to give me the carving-place, which I abominate. True, the carver may save the best slice for himself, but it is sure to be cold before he can snatch time to eat it. Ever while you live, sit *next* to

**t**he carver, if you can, for there you may intercept the tit bits, and demolish them without interruption."

Acting upon this prudent principle, he had soon satisfied the cravings of his hunger, when, in reply to the inquiries of Lomax, he explained the cause of his impunctuality : — " Why, you see, my good friend, it was too dirty to walk, and coach-hire from the Temple to Bermondsey is no joke, so, as I knew that my friend Sam Ward was going to Greenwich to dinner, and hates driving alone, I kindly offered to fill the vacant place in his gig for a part of the way."

" Or, in other words, you sponged upon him for a cast," said the captain.

" But, when it came to the door," pursued Pike, " I did not at all like the look of his new horse, a tall, rampant, pawing creature, who threw back his ears, which I consider a very bad sign, and glared at me askance, as if he

ached off triumphantly. In the eagerness of our dispute, however, I quite forgot my great coat, which I never recollected until I was some distance from the river, and, when I ran back to the stairs, the boatman had disappeared, and I was saluted by a shout of laughter from his vulgar comrades."

"In which I beg leave to join," roared the captain, with a horse-laugh.

With the wine, which seldom fails to promote vivacity, the conversation took a more general turn; and Pike, whose calculating cowardice made him afraid of exciting the smallest unkindly feeling, even in the most unimportant individual, sought every opportunity of conciliating the captain by fulsome compliments to his personal valour, the nautical profession, and the beauty of the Charming Kitty. Upon the former subjects no reply was vouchsafed, except an occasional, and not very courteous, exclamation of "Fudge !" or "Humbug !" but

can your landsmen when you are mounting a horse, or getting into a stage-coach, or sitting quietly at home. A ship may *go* down, and a horse may *come* down, but neither happens very often, so we are equal upon that score."

"But will you not admit that you are a sort of prisoners?" asked Mary.

"Ay! as a bird is in the air, or a fish in the ocean. Landsmen are prisoners, if you like, for half of them spend their whole lives in the same village or town, and almost all in the same country; but a sailor, who has no tether, no bounds or barriers to restrain him, who is as free and unshackled as the wind that fills his sail, wanders east, west, north, south, wherever his fancy or his duty may lead him; sees every nation under the sun, cares not a rope's end for any, and makes himself at home in all. I tell you what—you may talk of kings and emperors, but I question whether e'er a one of those crowned big wigs

upon his throne feels half so much like a monarch as I do, when I tread the deck of the *Charming Kitty*, as she spans over the foaming waters at ten or twelve knots an hour, and nothing to be seen on any side but sea and sky, as if she were the only live thing in the world. I should like to know what company is equal to a lonesomeness like this, where I am king of my own crew, and not only master of my own ship, but of the watery world that surrounds me. Why, I feel that I am then indeed a lord of the creation, and could almost fancy myself a demigod, if any such cattle were living in our days. Besides, lookee here—there's not only the grandeur of solitude in such a situation, but, to a certain extent, the pleasure of society, for I know that there's a busy and a pleasant world of fellow-creatures all around me, though I can't clap eyes on 'em; I know that there are lots of friendly hearts and pretty lanes below the horizon, and I have only got to steer

Accordingly to come straight into any port I choose, where I may shake the hands of the former, smack the lips of the latter, and empty a cheerful bowl with both—and so pass up the bottle, messmate, for talking makes a fellow dry, and I haven't spun such a long yarn since I made a speech to the underwriters, when they gave me a piece of plate for beating off a French privateer."

"You have compared yourself to a king," resumed Mary, "and you certainly pay one of the unenviable penalties of royalty, in not having any one with whom you can associate on terms of equality. Like Selkirk, in his uninhabited island, you are 'monarch of all you survey;' but the lonesomeness that gives you supremacy must deprive it of its charms, for discipline, I presume, will not allow you to make companions of your crew. Surely a few pleasant passengers would be an agreeable relief to your regal solitude?"

"Why, ay, there's some sense in that remark,"  
 replied the sailor; "first, because there's ~~no~~  
 better freight than passage-money, and secondly ~~it~~,  
 because a little live lumber of the gentry kind ~~it~~  
 does certainly save one, now and then, from ~~it~~  
 falling asleep, or having the doldrums during ~~it~~  
 a long calm. In that respect, I was unlucky,  
 for I was to have brought home a friend of my  
 own, only he was taken ill just as I was on the  
 point of sailing. I hope he is hearty again by  
 this time, for I don't know a pleasanter fellow  
 than honest Ned Ruddock."

At the mention of this ominous word the  
 uplifted wine glass fell with a smash from the  
 hand of Lomax, who suddenly started upon his  
 feet, and with a look and voice of agonized  
 terror shouted out, "Who? who? what—  
 what name did you mention?"

"Why, that of my friend, Edward Ruddock.  
 Do you know him? He is coming to England  
 on a very particular business, and I dare say

we shall have him in the river by the next ship."

The muscles of Lomax's face and body, which had previously been in a state of violent tension, became rapidly relaxed, a cold perspiration burst from his forehead, his teeth chattered in his head, and he sank with a tremulous spasm into his chair, inarticulately mumbling the word, "Lost ! lost ! lost !" Presently recovering himself, however, he sprang, as if by a convulsive effort, from his chair, and tottered out of the room, opening and clutching his fingers as he ejaculated, in a hoarse whisper, "Ha ! the key ! the key ! the garden gate ! the garden gate !"

Amazement and consternation were depicted upon the countenances of the visitors, several of whom rose from their chairs ; when Mrs. Lomax, whose usual presence of mind did not fail her, exclaimed with a persuasive and courteous smile, " Let me entreat you to be com-

posed, and to resume your seats. My poor husband is subject to these attacks."

"But why should the mention of Ned Rud-dock set him off into such a strange tantrum?" asked the captain.

"He was riding with a deceased friend of that name some years ago, when he was thrown from his horse, a concussion of the brain ensued, and the smallest allusion to that terrible accident invariably brings on one of these distressing fits. Excuse me, my friends, and prythee make yourselves at home during my absence. I will return to you as soon as I have administered to my poor patient one of his usual composing-draughts. Mary will do the honours of the table until I re-appear."

With these words she bowed smilingly to her guests, and quitted the room, casting a significant look at her daughter, as if to warn her that it was necessary to retain all her self-possession in this most critical emergency. Firm

ally was, the poor girl found herself equal to the duty imposed upon her. As she deeply affected by her father's and inexplicable seizure, but the tale invented by her mother filled her humiliating thoughts, and confirmed her suspicions that there must be some dark secret connected with her parents, of which she actually dreaded the discovery.

Therefore, her lover whispered in her ear, "I have never heard of your father's terrible seizure."

Mary, alike incapable of falsehood or dissimulation, could make no other reply. Her face burst into tears.

"Dearest Mary!" cried Evelyn, "you must not let me see you overcome — you had better not give way immediately — let me support you to the door."

She remained in silence to the company, for she trusted herself to make an apology, she then retired to her room; the rest of the ladies shortly

followed her example ; when Pike, voting himself into the chair, observed that they were bound in common charity to drink a bumper toast to the speedy recovery of their worthy host, whose indisposition none could regret more sincerely than himself. There might be some truth in this, for he had calculated on outstaying the others, and winning eight or ten guineas from him at piquet. As it was not now necessary to keep himself cool and collected for this purpose, he tossed off bumper after bumper, until the bottles were all emptied, and then intruding himself into the chariot of one of the retiring families, with the remark that he scarcely took up any room whatever, and could squeeze himself into any corner, he took possession of the best seat, laughing in his sleeve at the thought of getting a cab as far as 'Temple Bar, without the cost of a single sixpence.

Quickly dissipated was the bland smile that

had mantled over the features of Mrs. Lomax, on her quitting the dinner-table, and a look of stern wrath succeeded to it as she hastened to his bed-room in search of her husband. He was not there, but, on recollecting his broken exclamations, which afforded her a clue to his probable movements, she descended the stairs, and, passing into the garden, hurried, by the light of the moon, towards the gate at its opposite extremity.

At the sound of her approaching footsteps, the terror-stricken fugitive, who had sought to make his escape in that direction, sunk cowering to the ground, without daring to raise his eyes, hoarsely whispering, "I surrender—I could not get out—I have lost the key—I have lost the key!"

"Lost your wits, you mean," exclaimed the wife, with a look of unutterable scorn and indignation. "Pitiful, self-betraying wretch! would that I could crush you with my foot

when you thus lie prostrate, and coil yourself up like a reptile, as you are ! ”

“ Jane ! ” ejaculated Lomax, somewhat reassured by the voice of his wife, “ is it you — are you alone — quite, quite alone ? — No constable — no Bow-street officer ? ”

“ Chicken-hearted fool ! raise up your eyes and see, unless you are struck blind as well as mad. Idiot that I was, to league myself with so perilous an accomplice as a snivelling coward, whose imbecility — baugh ! I sicken to think of your loathsome and abject — up, thou unmanly creature, and hie thee to bed, lest thou shouldst further shame and expose thyself and me. Up, I say ! ”

“ Nay, now, dear Jane ! ” murmured the partner of her guilt, as he raised himself slowly upon his legs with the assistance of the gate, “ do not upbraid me — the deed was your suggestion — not mine. It was you who — and, besides, I have not your courage, — ”

all have. There is something terrible  
defiance of danger — no, no spirit of  
could display a more determined  
It amazes me ; I cannot understand

use *you* feel and think like a woman,  
e a man. Still trembling, still shrink-  
alarm when a leaf rustles in the wind !  
! dastard ! lean upon me ; we must  
nger missed from the house. Hush !  
ot a word ; keep your tongue quiet  
hose rattling teeth ; you have suffi-  
endangered yourself, me, and our  
for one night. Come on ! ”

lock is coming home,” groaned Lomax,  
conscious of what he was uttering—  
he who will expose us. The Lord  
rcy upon me ! I shall die upon a  
”

Heaven ! ” exclaimed his wife, firmly  
his arm with both her hands, “ I

will myself inform against you, and deliver you over instantly to the officers of justice, if you speak another word on this forbidden subject."

"Have pity on me, dear Jane; I scarcely know what I say or do. Lend me your arm and I will try to reach the house."

He made the attempt accordingly, and they were proceeding, slowly and in silence, when the shadow of a waving tree was wafted towards them, along the gravel walk, and Lomax, starting in an agony of terror, inarticulately muttered, "Ha! it is he—it is he! I saw that tall thin man in the low—"

"Wretch!" interposed his companion, stopping his mouth with her hand, "remember my threat—I will not be trifled with;—be silent, or by Heaven, you are a dead man! If you must needs be more frightened at shadows than I should be at realities, shut your coward eyes, and suffer me to lead you back."

Quailed by the stern energies of his accomplice, Lomax obeyed in silence, and tottered forwards until they passed beneath the deep shade of the great cypress tree, at the back of the house. As they emerged from it into the light of a cloudless moon, their figures presented a singular contrast, not only to each other, but to the scene that surrounded them.

Ever fortified and braced up to resistance by a conviction of danger, the wife advanced with a firm step, an erect attitude, and a countenance that seemed to defy not only all earthly dangers, but the very light of heaven that irradiated her fixed, resolute, and marble-like features.

Dauntless, but not rash or desperate, she glanced calmly and vigilantly around her, anxious to reach the house without exciting any avoidable observation or suspicion. Her rich dress, and the flashing of the jewels

in her hand. For she had rushed out without allowing her mind give her the semblance of a single terrible sensation that she was surrounded with perils of all sorts, and yet fully prepared to sustain the worst extremity of pain or torture.

To the act of this impersonation of fortune or rather of impudent audacity, clung her still shivering husband, cowering down with a hanging back, till he was almost half invisible, involuntarily opening and clutching his fingers, his eyes firmly closed, a cold perspiration on his brow, his thoughts scared and bewildered and his heart sinking within him, even at the chattering of his own teeth, and the creaking of his shoes as he crept furtively along upon his tiptoes.

Opposite as were these effects of a joint crime upon a powerful and an imbecile mind, they were still more at variance with the features of nature as displayed within the nar-

row precincts of the enclosure through which the guilty pair were passing. There all was peace and tranquillity : the stars were quietly twinkling in the serene heavens ; the moon looked placidly down upon the circular grass-plot, spangling the dew, and silvering the ever-greens that embowered it ; while the low, indistinct sounds, wafted at intervals from the distant haunts of men, gave additional intensity to the succeeding silence that brooded over the seclusion of the garden, to which the dark wide-spreading cypress imparted an additional character of peaceful solemnity.

By threading the plantation that adjoined the house, Mrs. Lomax reached a side door unobserved, passed up the back stairs, and made her way to her own room, still supporting her husband, who threw himself upon the bed with a deep groan, and instantly drew the clothes over him as if he would hide himself from every eye.

In this position she left him ; and, cautiously locking the door behind her as she quitted the apartment, returned to the dining-room, where a few of the guests, whose carriages had not yet arrived, were still remaining. Apologising, with a courteous smile and an air of perfect composure, for the disturbance that had been so unexpectedly occasioned, she declared that she had left the invalid much better, again adverted to the unfortunate accident which had subjected him to these distressing attacks, and then, turning the conversation to indifferent subjects, continued chatting, unconcernedly, with her friends, until they had all taken their departure.

Although she had thus adroitly hushed the suspicions, and counteracted the mischief, which this untoward occurrence at first threatened to produce, she could not restore to the mind of her husband the comparative tranquillity in which his senses had been lately steeped. That

predominance to which he had hitherto quietly submitted, in the conviction of his wife's superior courage and talent, now lost its influence ; the return of Ruddock, and all the frightful consequences to which it might lead, haunted him both by day and by night, filling him with such profound horror, that his faculties threatened to give way ; his somnambulism returned ; he saw spectral gibbets and phantasmal hangmen, and raved incessantly about instant flight to America, or some still more remote quarter of the earth.

In vain did his confederate argue that they had no reason whatever for supposing that Ruddock doubted or meant to dispute the will, even if he returned to England, which was by no means certain, since he had been left seriously indisposed in a climate notoriously fatal to European constitutions, and might, not improbably, deliver them finally from all their apprehensions by his death. In vain did she

implore her husband, by his duty and affection as a father, to struggle with the growing madness of his terror, and to defer all thoughts of ignominious flight, which was of itself equivalent to a confession of guilt, at least until they should have accomplished the marriage of their daughter, whose settlement in life, if there were the smallest foundation for his fears, it was now ten thousand times more than ever incumbent upon him to secure. His natural selfishness, rendered paramount and intense by a blind dismay, incapacitated him alike from reasoning, or from being in the smallest degree affected by any other feeling than the absorbing consideration of his own flight, his own safety, and the transmission abroad of his unjustly acquired wealth, for the future gratification of his own sensuality.

With this view he stole out in the evening for he was afraid to trust himself in the street or to face his fellow-creatures during the day.

and made inquiries at the water-side respecting the vessels that would soonest sail for America, while he summoned his broker to Cypress House, that he might consult him about converting his funded property into gold, or American stock.

Too vigilant not to have quickly discovered these proceedings, and cherishing a latent suspicion that her mean-spirited partner might attempt to abscond with whatever property he could collect, and leave his whole family in the lurch, Mrs. Lomax found herself in a dilemma of the most painful and harassing description.

Any thing that was likely to interfere with Mary's pending and most desirable marriage was above all things to be avoided, while she felt scarcely less solicitous to prevent any sudden change, either in their mode of life or place of residence, which, by disturbing the keen sensibility, might aggravate the illness of her

darling Benjamin, whose rapidly increasing debility now began, for the first time, to fill her with apprehension and anguish.

With such powerful motives for wishing to control her husband, and detach him from his perilous designs, it is difficult to describe her vexation, when she discovered that he had thrown off the yoke of her authority, and become totally unmanageable. A mightier terror had now swallowed up his fear of his wife; Ruddock, the dreaded Ruddock was the present master of his fate and actions; and he prosecuted his covert plans for quitting the country with a craft which it was difficult to detect, and a dogged stubbornness which, when his purpose was discovered, it was impossible to subdue.

How to manage so intractable a subject, how to frustrate his secret machinations, or the danger of his life-involving indiscretions, how, in short, to avert the ruin that seemed to be im-

reading over the prospects of Mary, and the prosperity of the whole family, awakened the most intense anxiety in the mind of Mrs. Lomax.

In a difficulty of this nature, courage, which he possessed even to desperation, was not of the smallest avail. Not less fertile, however, in contriving expedients, than dauntless in executing them, she quickly devised a plan which extricated her for the moment from the perils with which she was environed. We have recorded that Lomax, urged by the advice, and assisted by the vigilance of his wife, had latterly been practising a rare temperance in his potations. Under the pretext that his health now required a relaxation of this restraint, she indulged him in his favourite wines, drugging his evening posset with an opiate which usually lulled him into a heavy sleep for the remainder of the night. Delighted at this recurrence to his favourite habits, and still more at the mental lethargy that made him in-

sensible to the daily terrors and spectral dreams by which he had been haunted, the wretched man consented to be confined to his own room, dosing and drinking away his time in a sottish unconsciousness of its lapse.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Lomax, who gave out that the invalid was affected with a trifling nervous indisposition, for which quietude and a temporary seclusion had been prescribed, exhibited so calm a demeanour, and alluded to her husband's inopportune seizure with such an apparent unconcern, that any vague suspicions which it might have been calculated to excite were effectually lulled.

Successful as she had been in thus hoodwinking her friends, she did not less feel the importance of accelerating a marriage with which so many critical and unforeseen casualties might interfere. The father of the lover, a keen, penetrating man of business, might make inquiries of which it was impossible to

ipate the result; Lomax, bursting from confinement in a fit of terror or intoxication, t ruin all by some fearful revelation; Rud-might, in very truth, return to claim his ed property; or the will might be chal-d, and a suit instituted in his behalf, a nstance of which it would be impossible ppress the public knowledge.

pressed with these convictions, Mrs. Lo-expedited all the preliminary arrange-s, and exerted herself to prevent any un-sary delay in the completion of the iage. It is scarcely necessary to state that bject was warmly advocated by Evelyn w; his parents willingly lent themselves e wishes of their son; while Mary, whose n had been haunted, ever since her father's terror at the dinner-table, with an un-ed and most oppressive misgiving that catastrophe or disclosure might dash the red cup of happiness from her lips, felt

an indescribable load removed from her heart, when the settlements were mutually agreed upon and prepared, and the day of her nuptial was at last fixed.

**CHAPTER XI.**

nk not I love him, though I ask for him ;  
ut a peevish boy: yet he talks well,  
what care I for words? Yet words do well,  
he that speaks them pleases those that hear."

SHAKESPEARE.

return to Eagle Wharf, both of whose  
d young inmates had struggled with  
sness and distressing thoughts, on the  
at followed Hunter's intoxication, and  
grading exposure of which it had been  
asion. Only a few minutes before that  
y affair, Helen, apparently conquered by  
uments and persuasions of her friend,  
her heart had previously surrendered  
etion, had agreed to grant an interview

she herself

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had long sighed in secret, the peerless paragon for whose possession he was willing to encounter every extremity of fate. Much as she regretted the disreputable inebriety under which this declaration was made, it afforded a welcome antidote to the coldness that had offended her in his letter. That he was in love with her, deeply, sincerely, passionately, and without the impulse of sordid motives—for intoxication draws forth the genuine and disinterested feelings of the heart—she now believed it impossible to doubt; and in that cherished conviction, the more she reflected upon his misconduct, the less did she find herself disposed to punish it by denying him her presence, and withdrawing from him the favour she had hitherto conceded, though she might hesitate, and insist upon full satisfaction of all her misgivings, before she could grant a decided encouragement to his suit.

Poor Rose, in the mean time, was passing a

weeping night in a contest of feelings sometimes sharply distressing, sometimes redeemed by soothing hopes and lofty aspirations. Not for one instant could her acute perceptions be deceived. Hunter's ebriety, which she attributed to some temporary and excusable excitement, had disclosed the real state of his affections. For her, and not for Helen, had his passionate love effusion been intended—a fact rendered not less indisputable by his eyes than by his language. She herself was still the secret mistress of his heart, while he was openly paying his addresses to her friend. Ought she to condemn him for this? Oh, no, no! She did justice to his real motives, to his forbearance, to his magnanimity, and could not only forgive, but pity, admire, and imitate him. Never seeking to win *her* affections, he had been perpetually struggling to conceal and subdue his own. With a noble generosity, worthy of his exalted character, he had de-

ermined to sacrifice his misplaced passion on the shrine of filial and fraternal duty, not altogether uninfluenced, perhaps, by the discovery that he had unintentionally awakened a tender interest in the bosom of Helen.

In the midst of fast-flowing tears, the high-spirited girl felt a proud pleasure in the thought of surrendering up all the sweet though secret wishes of her own heart, and dedicating herself to the felicity of her friends. "I am sure *you* will all be happy," she inarticulately uttered:—"very, very happy, and what ought to wish for more? As for me, *my* fate is material. I am alone—an orphan—and I shall have one consolation of which nothing can deprive me. I may feel my sorrows and my solitude for a time; but my failing health, my attenuated frame, my withering heart, everything tells me, and most welcome are the things, that I shall not feel them long."

When they encountered each other in the

morning. the looks of both friends bore evidence of their having passed an anxious and restless night, but in every other respect their expression was different. Helen's countenance was agitated by alternations of restlessness, irresolution and passive dejection; while the warm and spiritual face of her friend, in spite of its pained aspect, wore the composure of one whose soul is made up to a fixed, an exalted, an inflexible purpose. It was clear that the mind had triumphed over the strength of her affection, and the weakness of her frame, but it was equally manifest that the victory had not been achieved without a desolating ravage.

A silence of some continuance, which both felt to be embarrassing, but which neither could summon resolution to dispel, was at length broken by Helen's exclaiming, with an assumed air of indifference: — "I need not disclose to you my thoughts, dear Rose, for I know your faculty of divining them. Tell me,

ere your's taking the same direction as mine?"

"Yes; for I was thinking of Mr. Hunter's letter."

"Right! Whether it be sympathy or intention, I know not, but you can always dive into my mind. I must send some answer to it, I suppose; and yet I scarcely know that it deserves any notice whatever, after the unbecoming behaviour of which we were witnesses last night."

"Not unbecoming in every sense," said Rose, with a languid smile; "for methinks our admirer never appeared half so handsome. The flush of his usually pale cheeks heightened the brilliancy of his eyes; a joyous hilarity had chased away the habitual dejection of his countenance; and, as he sate, not ungracefully upon his temporary throne, his noble features, radiant in the sun, and his locks waving in the wind, the very *beau-ideal* of tipsiness; he

might almost have been taken for the beautiful Bacchus returning in triumph from his Indian expedition."

"Psha! what are the man's looks or demeanour to the purpose? You do not mean to assert that intoxication can ever be becoming

"Certainly not; but neither can you yourself deny that Mr. Hunter's inebriety, however ungentlemanly may be the offence, which one that I dream not of vindicating, manifested itself after a gentlemanly fashion. Elevated as he was, his voice lost not its winning melody; and his real nature, which upon the occasions throws off all disguise, came forth in the light without exhibiting a single vulgar unworthy trait. Even in his unconsciousness his classical and poetical mind gave a redeeming colour to his effusions, and he could talk of nothing but the beautiful fictions of Greece or the still more exquisite imaginings of our matchless Shakspeare."

“ A precious apology truly ! So, then drunkenness, the vilest of all vices, is to stand excused, if it display itself in the extravagant gesticulations and fustian hyperboles of a moon-struck player.”

Of the sin I offer no defence ; I only maintain that it brings forth the real character of the sinner, and that Mr. Hunter, in that temporary loss of reason, which leads many men, according to the vulgar saying, to make beasts of themselves, suffered no worse metamorphosis than to be transformed from a wharf clerk into the poetical and sun-crowned monarch of an enchanted island.”

“ Why, it must be confessed,” said Helen, who, as usual, had been affecting more indignation than she really felt, in order to provoke from her companion a vindication of her lover ; “ it must be confessed that his exaltation improved his appearance, and that a little excess in wine, a casual tipsiness, is less offensive

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difficult to overlook ; but the tipsiness could not be unintentional, and you yourself have declared it to be an indefensible vice."

"Yes, where it is habitual and voluntary ; but I can imagine fifty circumstances that may extenuate, if not wholly excuse, a solitary offence of the kind ; and I could almost pledge my life that Mr. Hunter's will prove to have been an accidental and vindicable excess."

"Indeed ! are you serious in thus pledging yourself for the sobriety of your client ? Yes, see you are : your earnest, imploring eyes, your quivering lips, assure me that you believe implicitly in his ability to acquit himself. ~~It~~, recollect, dear Rose, that you are *my* advocate, as well as his, ay, and by a much surer and tenderer tie than any that he can give ; and tell me candidly, my sweet friend and counsellor, how would you have me act in ~~an~~ awkward predicament. What am I to do ~~in~~ this saucy epistle ? Am I to consider it

as a serious offer of his hand, or conclude that it was written under the influence of deep poetisations, and so toss it into the fire, to be no more seen or thought of than the fumes that engendered it?"

"You are trifling, Helen, and the occasion does not authorise levity. You yourself do not believe it to have been penned under any other inspiration than that of a settled purpose and a deep feeling. Your course of action is too clearly indicated to admit of doubt or deviation. It is first indispensable that —. Hist! hark I hear footsteps approaching — it is Samuel's tread."

"I can distinguish no sound, but your senses are so keen that if you chose to enact the part of Fine-ear in the fairy tale, I verily believe you would hear the grass springing out of the ground."

The accuracy of Rose's auditory nerves was presently confirmed by the entrance of the

servant, who again left the room, after having placed a letter in the hands of Helen. "From Mr. Hunter," exclaimed the latter, colouring deeply as she glanced at the superscription. "Now, my fairy Mentor, how am I to act? Shall I break the seal, or return it, together with his love-letter, or rather with his offer of marriage, which is no love-letter, under a blank cover?"

"Ridiculous question! this is mere coquetry — the affectation of an indifference which you do not, cannot, feel. If I thought you capable of so much mingled rudeness and cruelty, I should from that moment cease to recognize you as my friend."

"Heyday!" exclaimed Helen, somewhat abashed at the detection of her own insincerity, and not a little surprised at the sudden vehemence of her companion, "your zeal transports you from an advocate into a combatant. Well, then, since I have your sanction, not to

say your command, I will e'en break the seal and see whether our king of the enchanted island can adduce any valid reason why I should not be fined five shillings and set in the stocks for drunkenness."

Unable as she had been to read the letter without a deep and manifest emotion, Helen exclaimed with an affected air of unconcern, although in a faltering voice, "Well, my little sorceress, have you again divined the contents of this epistle in my tell-tale countenance, or shall I submit it to your inspection?"

"Since you offer me your confidence, I must confess that the latter would be a much more satisfactory course."

So saying, Rose took the paper, and cast her eyes rapidly over its contents, which were to the following purport.

"The miseries of a sleepless night, of a disordered frame, of remorseful and most humiliating reflections, I could endure with some degree

of patience, for I have deserved them all; but the torments of suspense upon a point which must decide my whole future course of life, and, above all, the fear that I may seem, in the eyes of Miss Owen, infinitely more debased and culpable than I really am—these, these are sufferings which become the more intolerable the more I reflect upon them. The defence, or at least the extenuations, that I can offer for my temporary madness must be stated personally to be understood, for I am too miserable, too impatient, too agitated, to commit them to paper. By your regard for justice, for mercy, I implore you to grant me a short interview. It will be the last time, unless with your special permission, that you will ever be addressed by the almost heart-broken

“ALFRED HUNTER.”

“P. S. One more favour. If you allow me to call upon you, which I believe you are too

just too generous to refuse, may I request you to name an hour when I shall not be likely to encounter Mr. Bryant. He has dismissed me from my employment; he had a full right to do so, since I was every way unfitted for it; but he has accompanied this measure with coarse and contumelious language, to which I find it difficult to submit. My temper, as I fear you must have observed, has latterly become hasty, and I would not knowingly expose myself to the chance of forgetting the disparity of our years, the relation in which we stand, or the gratitude that I owe him for his past favours.

“A. H.”

Vain were the struggles of Rose to conceal her agitation, as she read, or rather devoured, the contents of the letter. In spite of the forced compression of her lips, the muscles around her mouth were involuntarily convulsed, and, as she lifted up her face to return the

aper, her companion perceived that she was weeping.

“Heavens!” ejaculated Helen, “what can have occasioned this deep emotion? I saw nothing so very affecting in what Mr. Hunter has written.”

Rose made no reply until she had somewhat mastered her feelings, when she exclaimed:—  
“Ah, Helen! you did not see, you did not notice, what I had detected before I began its perusal. Look at it again, and you will perceive that the paper is in various places marked with his ——, marked with his ——.” Again she hesitated, and several seconds elapsed before she could indistinctly murmur the word “tears.”

“Poor fellow!” ejaculated Helen, as her eye fell upon the spots which she had previously overlooked.

“Poor fellow!” repeated Rose, but in a tone infinitely more soft and tender than that of her

companion. "You *must* see him; you *must* grant his request," she continued after a pause.

"*Must!*" cried Helen; "I don't see the necessity, and I very much doubt the prudence of such a step. I don't like the tone of this letter. It exhibits peevishness at the detection, rather than penitence for the commission of his offence. He confesses himself, you see, to be of a hasty temper."

"Which is often, dear Helen, the best evidence of keen apprehension and sensitive feelings. Judge not of him by his present deranged state. Grant his request, hear his vindication, give him hope, and I will answer for his temper, because I know the goodness of his heart and the soundness of his principles."

"Then you know more of him than I do. Can you deny his pride, his haughtiness, at the very moment when he ought to be the most humble? See how he speaks of my uncle!"

"As there are elastic substances which only

spring upwards when pressed, so there are noble minds which assert their independence most strenuously when Fortune seems the most resolved to crush them. Mr. Hunter has lost his appointment: blighted hopes, ruin, a sense of self-abasement, combine to distress and overwhelm him. Would you trample upon a fallen man? With an impassioned solemnity, he declares that he can extenuate his misconduct. He is entitled to a hearing. A rash and uncharitable judgment is often a worse offence than that which it blindly condemns. Helen, I appeal to yourself—you must, you will—you shall—see him.”

“*Shall* is a strong word, my little dictatress, and your reddening cheeks assure me that your feelings are not less vehement than your language; but, surely, surely, my dear Rose, you overlook the impertinence of his asking me to grant him a clandestine interview, for my hero, it seems, will not cross the threshold if

the owner of the house be within it. On  
considering the indiscretion, the indelicacy, the great  
inconvenience, of my according to his request."

"Would you expose him or your uncle to  
scandal in the present excited state of the  
country? Mr. Heister, I think, has shown  
great discretion in wishing to avoid any suc-  
cessful disclosure, and as to yourself, there can  
be nothing considered still less indelicate. If  
your seeing him since I am made acquainted  
with your interview

"Am I to understand that you wish to be  
party to it?" asked Heister with an arch smile.  
"Nothing in the case——."

"N—n—n—" interposed Rose, in some  
exclamation: "but as you make me your conf-  
idante, there can be nothing covert or clandes-  
tine in the matter. Witnesses are seldom very  
valuable, I believe, in the meetings and expla-  
nations of lovers."

"Lovers. I cannot recognize that term

when applied to myself. At present, the reciprocity is of a somewhat Irish character. It is all on one side."

"It will not long continue so, if Mr. Hunter, as I confidently anticipate, can explain and extenuate his recent act of intemperance."

In this manner the discussion was maintained for some time, Helen, as before, urging objections for the very purpose of having them refuted, and of obtaining a sanction to the secret wishes of her heart; Rose, penetrating with her customary acuteness into her friend's motives, and conducting her, by the pride-saving road of apparent conviction and concession, to the point at which she had all along been wishing to arrive. The result of this mutual *finer* between parties usually so frank and unreserved, was the concoction and transmission of the following brief note to the object of their joint solicitude.

"Miss Owen presents her compliments to

Mr. Hunter, and begs to inform him, in answer to his application, that she will be at home between one and two o'clock this morning.

“Eagle Wharf. Thursday.”

Short as it was, this reply had not been adopted without much debating. Helen's sense of propriety and delicacy being somewhat revolted by the idea of making an assignation, she resolved that the terms of her compliance should be as formal and frigid as possible, and she accordingly wrote to her lover, as if she were making an appointment with a tradesman.

It was known that both Mr. and Mrs. Bryant would be absent at the hour mentioned, a circumstance, however, to which she did not make the smallest allusion, conceiving it derogatory to lend herself to any thing that wore an underhand appearance.

istent with strict rectitude, and her  
for a frank straightforwardness, can  
ecided by such female casuists as may  
s have been in love. Rose, who was  
atisfied with the matter to object to  
er, took care to guard against any  
f purpose on the part of her friend,  
displayed more irresolution than she  
, by instantly despatching the note to  
ition.

ense more trying than that to which  
s exposed, while expecting the arrival  
tor, it would be difficult to imagine.  
ment and her affections were at open  
Even if the object of her partiality,

Rose, would condemn an union which in a worldly sense might be pronounced signally disadvantageous.

This objection, however, made but small and fleeting impression upon her mind. Sordid considerations of any sort were utterly foreign to her nature ; delighting in generous actions, and a magnanimous liberality, the thought of redeeming Mr. Hunter from the degradation that saddened his soul, of lifting him up now that he was fallen and friendless, and of replacing him in his original and proper sphere, had at once elevated and entranced her bosom in many an hour of sweet and solitary musing. It did so now, but less uninterruptedly than before, for the bright vision was clouded with menacing shapes that would not be put aside.

All the alleged evil habits of the coming visitor threw their shadows before ; his misdeeds, and above all the fatal intoxication, of which ~~she~~ had been an eye-witness, rose up in judgment.

against him ; and the result was a firm determination not to suffer her feelings to be entrapped, but to subject the culprit to a most severe and searching scrutiny, when he came up for judgment, and to dismiss him for ever from her thoughts, should he not' come out from the ordeal with a character that would justify her regard. Strange as it may appear, we are, nevertheless, bound to record that, during this mental conflict, which might have seemed painful enough to absorb all her attentions, she found time to make frequent reference to her looking-glass, and had just altered the arrangement of her hair for the third time, when Mr. Hunter was announced.

How vain are the cold resolves of the judgment, how rapidly does their icy barrier melt away, when smitten by the electric fire of the feelings ! Dispelled in an instant were all the stern resolves of Helen, as she marked the wretched appearance of her lover. His looks

were lagging, his hair and dress disordered, his complexion wan and sallow; his swollen eyes recalled the tear-drops she had noticed in his letter, and his whole aspect confirmed the truth of his declaration that he was almost heart-broken. "Good heavens, Mr. Hunter!" she exclaimed in a tone of mingled alarm and compassion. "how ill you look! what is the matter?"

"I cannot look worse than I feel, for I am sick, sick at heart, sick with the bitterness of the soul," replied her lover in a hollow voice. "O Miss Owen! If I do not throw myself upon my knees to implore, to supplicate, your pardon, believe me when I assure you that my heart is bowed down to the ground with sorrow and remorse, and that my spirit lies prostrate before you. I am overwhelmed, crushed, with a sense of humiliation, and with a profound anguish of soul, which you must gather from my looks rather than my language. Most

humbly do I entreat you to forgive me, if, in a moment of oblivion, unconsciousness, temporary madness, I uttered a syllable that could imply a feeling of disrespect towards one who possesses my entire —— my entire ——.”

He paused in an evident embarrassment, from which Helen hastened to relieve him. Touched as she was by the affecting humility of a spirit usually so proud and unbending, she had had time to recover from her first surprise, and her air was reserved, almost chilling, as she replied:—  
“I am not aware, sir, however indecorous might be your demeanour, that you uttered any thing, so far as I am concerned, of an unpardonable nature. When a man forgets what is due to himself, he is little likely to remember what is due to others. That I was equally shocked, sorry, and surprised at the indecorous spectacle of which I was an involuntary witness, I will not deny; but I can, nevertheless, forgive you, if you can so far explain or ex-

estate is enough as to be fairly enabled to support himself.

"I am, I am, and it is for this purpose that I have sought for present interview. Oh, think me not I beseech you, by one solitary instance of impropriety: yes, I repeat, solitary, single, is appreciated as it will be unfollowed. By nature I am temperate, I might almost say abstemious. In this there is little merit, for there is no self-denial: my sobriety is constitutional. Never did I indulge in wine, even when I possessed the means; and latterly I have never tasted it except when I have taken an occasional glass in this very house."

"Strange, then, that you should have been tempted to commit excess in the broad light of day."

"Strange, but not inexplicable, if you will deign to listen to me. Among other effects saved from the wreck of my late father's property and my own, was a hamper of Madeira,

valued less for its own sake than for that of its donor, an East India captain, and an old friend of the family. Expressly reserved for joyous days, I need not say that it has hitherto remained intact, for our domestic calendar, since our unhappy reverses, has not known a single festival. Yesterday, however, Mr. Holloway, to whom my sister is betrothed, took an early dinner with us, previously to his returning to the country. Elated by new and cheering prospects, for there was a hope that the unhappy bar which has so long prevented his marriage was about to be removed, he suddenly proposed that we should try the contents of the unopened hamper, a suggestion to which I willingly acceded. I, myself, was in a high state of excitement; I had just written a letter I hope you have not been offended by it — a letter on which the fate of my whole future was to depend; and hopes, idle and pre-emptuous, I fear, but not the less agitating,

attended in my bosom with the most painful misgivings. We drank to each other's success, a toast which it was difficult not to repeat and to retaliate. and my heated blood, for I was previously feverish with anxiety, becoming more and more inflamed, I sought to quench its fire by fresh bumpers. Still, my potations were by no means deep, but I was unused to them: and the hurry with which I accompanied my friend to the Borough, to see him into the stage that was to convey him away, completed the disorder of my faculties. Of what occurred after my return to the Wharf, I retain no recollection whatever. Would to Heaven that it could be blotted from the minds of others as effectually as it is from my own! I have done; I have nothing further to urge in extenuation of my misdeed, than to remind you that it was partly occasioned by my anxiety on your account, and to repeat that, had I been an habitual toper, nay, had I even been accustomed

to moderate potations, I should not have been so suddenly and completely overcome."

"It has been altogether a most untoward affair," said Helen, endeavouring to conceal beneath a demure look her delight at his satisfactory exculpation; "but, as you really seem to have been more unfortunate than culpable, and have made a much better defence than I had supposed possible, I have no hesitation in saying —, I am willing to confess—in short, so far as I myself am concerned, I freely forgive you."

"Do you?—can you?—is it possible? But I need not be surprised; you are all goodness, all condescension, all generosity, a conviction which emboldens me to —."

He hesitated; when Helen, suspecting that he was about to urge his suit, and not wishing to decide upon it until he should have furnished all the explanations she required, exclaimed:—  
"I have before heard that some painful and

insuperable difficulty prevented the  
 completion of your sister's marriage. May  
 I inquire its nature?"

Hunter frankly detailed the whole history of  
 her engagement, and of the unfortunate cir-  
 cumstance that had indefinitely postponed her  
 nuptials, justifying his motives in counselling  
 her to embark her little portion in speculation,  
 but bitterly condemning his rashness and want  
 of judgment in selecting an adventure which had  
 been attended with such disastrous consequences.

"I cannot better show my sense of your  
 straightforwardness and candour than by imita-  
 ting it," said Helen; "and, since you have  
 voluntarily placed yourself on your defence,  
 I may, perhaps, stand excused if I mention all  
 the other improprieties that I have heard laid  
 to your charge."

These she accordingly recapitulated without  
 hesitation, laying particular stress on his im-  
 puted addiction to gambling and to improper

pany, as well as on his general improvisation. Admitting his infatuation as to the chase of lottery-tickets, always in the same hope of restoring the fortunes of his mother and sister, he cleared himself most emphantly from every other inculpation, explaining such circumstances as had appeared equivocal in his conduct, avowing his errors wherever he felt himself to be in fault, and extending throughout his whole vindication a candour so manly, dignified, and ingenuous, blended with a modesty, contrition, and sensibility so truly touching, that Helen, who thought he had never appeared to half so much advantage, thrilled with a generous exultation when she found it almost impossible to contain, while her heart beat vehemently, but with grateful pulsation, in the delightful assurance that all its tender predilections were abundantly justified, all its occasional misgivings effectually and finally dispelled.

— And now, Miss Owen," resumed Hunter, "now that I have extenuated, as I hope, my admitted errors and irregularities, and rebutted the injurious calumnies with which I had been assailed, may I stand acquitted of presumption or vanity, if I venture to declare my belief that I must still appear to you somewhat less deserving than I really am? We are all the creatures of circumstances; and much of my inferiority of temper, and perhaps all my irregularities of conduct, may be traced to this source. Under happier auspices, all these defects, if I know any thing of my own disposition, will be torn up by the roots and destroyed for ever, to leave me, as I trust, a wiser and a better man. My principles have never been justly arraigned, and it is because I feel myself not every way unworthy of you—pardon my arrogance in saying so—because I know that I should devote myself, heart and soul, to your happiness—because I cherish the confident hope

succeeding in this object, that I have dared  
become a suitor for your hand, and now  
only await your decision upon my future  
day."

With all Helen's vivacity and plain good  
sense, there was, as we have already stated, a  
tincture of the sentimental, and even of the ro-  
mantic, in her disposition, which was power-  
fully developed whenever a particular chord  
was made to vibrate. Any thing generous,  
noble, magnanimous, instantly awoke her sym-  
pathies; and the instances of this nature which  
she had encountered in real life, or in the  
course of her reading, immediately fired her  
with the ambition of imitating them.

There was an occasion, as it appeared to her,  
partially realizing her dormant aspira-  
tions. There would be something noble as  
rare in bestowing her hand and fortune

"a brave man struggling with the storms  
of life;" in selecting him, despite the antici-

pated opposition of her guardian and all the world. and in securing the marriage and happiness of her friend Harriet.

Perhaps the state of her affections kindled this generous enthusiasm ; and it certainly lent a peculiar sweetness to her smile and tone, as she exclaimed with downcast eyes, and some little hesitation : — “ Once more, Mr. Hunter, I will imitate your candour, and, if I appear to be too easily won, you must attribute it to my hatred of equivocation and deceit. Your manly and ingenuous defence has carried conviction to my mind ; has increased ——— has satisfied— I mean to say that all my scruples are removed ; and, in the firm conviction that your future course of life will justify my present confidence, I confess my ——— my prepossession in your favour, and thus tender you my hand as frankly as you have solicited it.”

Utterly confounded at an acceptance not less cordial and flattering than unexpected—for he

anticipated so quick a decision — Hunter  
took the proffered hand, and pressed it to his  
forehead in a speechless bewilderment. He had  
accepted his presumptuous suit in desperation  
rather than in hope ; from a sense of duty to  
himself, not from the impulses of his own heart ;  
though he had left nothing undone that  
might ensure its success, he could not expel  
from his bosom a latent wish that it might

That secret yearning was now for ever  
frustrated ; his self-sacrifice was accom-  
plished, his misery stamped with the seal of  
eternity.

Overwhelmed with gratitude for the con-  
fidence and the affections of Helen, his thoughts  
turned, nevertheless, to Rose Mayhew, now  
ever lost, with a throb of anguish that gave  
him a foretaste of the life-long martyrdom to  
which he had doomed himself. Unable, after  
several ineffectual attempts at coherent speech,  
finally his bewildered faculties, he struck his

threw upon his forehead, and rushed out of the room, exclaiming in a hoarse whisper:—"To-morrow — to-morrow — I cannot thank you now. I am overcome — astounded — air! air! I cannot breathe."

Vain, in the estimation of Helen, would have been the most eloquent effusion of love and gratitude, when compared with this paroxysm of irrepressible emotion, which elicited all the tender sympathies of her nature. "Strange," she exclaimed, "that a man whose sensibilities are so acute should have been so cold and unimpassioned, not only in his letter, but in the whole course of our colloquy, up to the very moment when I thawed the frozen barriers of his emotions by ——." Her soliloquy was interrupted by the sudden though noiseless entrance of Rose, her eyes glaring, her mouth half open, and every feature lighted up with an intense anxiety. Swift as thought, she ran up to Helen, placed her hands upon her shoulders,

peered for an instant into her countenance, and then, bursting into a wild hysterical laugh, exclaimed : — “ I see it — I see it in your looks ! Is not every thing happily settled ? Speak ! speak ! for God’s sake, keep me not in suspense.”

“ Give me but a moment’s time, my dear little picture of impatience, and I will tell you all. I cannot yet say that every thing is settled, but I have made more rapid progress than was, perhaps, quite decorous, more than could have been expected by any one unacquainted with the ductility of the female heart, when it is mollified by the affections.”

“ Every thing, then, is explained, and you have accepted him ? One word, only one single word ; I ask no more : why, why do you trifle with me ? ”

“ Rather let me ask why are you so petulant ? Prythee let my pride and reserve have a gentle descent, and suffer me, like Cæsar, to fall be-

comingly. Mr. Hunter's inebriety was an accident which I, of all people, ought not to visit severely, since it arose in some degree from the perturbation and fever of his mind upon my account. Most triumphantly has he refuted the calumnies of Mrs. Skinner and others; and, as to the little infirmities and peccadilloes which we have so often noticed, he admits them candidly, and confirms your repeated averment, that they are solely ascribable to the morbid action of a mind placed in an unnatural element. Perhaps I have been too sanguine, too pliable, too confiding, but I yielded implicit credence to his tale; I trusted his assurance that better circumstances would make him a wiser and a better man. I believed him when he solemnly pledged himself to dedicate his whole future life to my happiness, and — and — and — psha! Why cannot you spare one's blushes. Why do you force me to own that I confessed his affection to be returned,

and made him a formal surrender of my hand?"

Nature could no longer sustain the struggle which had so long agitated the bosom of the sensitive and fragile Rose. She attempted to ejaculate "Thank God!" but the words died inaudibly away, her eyes closed, her lips were compressed, her hands clenched, and she fell into the arms of her friend in all the corpse-like rigidity of a fit.

## CHAPTER XII.

"Friendship is constant in all other things,  
 Save in the office and affairs of love ;  
 Therefore, all hearts in love use their own tongues"  
 HAMLET

ALTHOUGH this alarming paroxysm continued for some time, it yielded at length to the customary remedies ; when Rose, making light of her indisposition, which she attributed to an intense over-anxiety on her friend's account, earnestly intreated to know every thing that had passed at the recent interview. "What!" she exclaimed, when the recital was completed, "have you then made no arrangement with Mr. Hunter for your future interviews? Too well do I know his proper and manly pride, to

ieve that he will again pass the doors of  
s house, if he be considered an intruder."

"Grammercy ! my hasty friend ! was this a  
nt for *me* to arrange ? would you have me  
omplish impossibilities ? You forget that  
ad no sooner ' owned the soft impeachment '   
my love, and stretched forth my hand in  
firmation of my sincerity, than my capri-  
us suitor, instead of throwing himself upon  
s knees to thank me for my condescension,  
arted like a guilty thing and fled."

"Poor fellow ! poor fellow !" sighed Rose !  
Oh, how deeply do I feel — how much do I  
mpathize — how perfectly, I mean, can I  
nderstand his distress and bewilderment !  
at this important omission must be repaired ;  
e happiness of too many persons is involved  
this affair to permit the smallest delay. I  
ast allow you no excuse for hesitation, still  
is for change of purpose. Mary Lomax  
ssesses your entire confidence, and well she

may. But where should we find a more discreet and trustworthy girl? I will see her this morning, instantly, and we will arrange every thing between us."

"—GENTLY. Now more, my little Hotspur. You would have your actions like your thoughts—bold as the lightning in the collied night! But I have not the smallest wish to break up my marriage with such unseemly precipitance: nor if I had, would I allow you, in your present weak and exhausted plight, to leave your couch or stir a single step in the business. Nay, I will not even grant you the privilege of our sex—you shall not talk, and so I will leave you to tranquillity and repose, which, I trust, are the only physicians you will require."

"For an hour or two I will patiently submit to your orders, in the hope that I may thus gather strength to break them;" and so saying, the affectionate girl drew her friend to her

bosom, embraced her tenderly, congratulated her over and over on her approaching happiness, thanked her with an impassioned energy for having taken her advice, and then, with uplifted hands and glistening eyes, invoked upon her the choicest blessings of Heaven.

Once more left at liberty to commune calmly with her own thoughts, Helen's mind was presently made up as to the course she should pursue. Her natural candour rendered her averse from concealments of any sort, while her courage and decision made her despise all temporizing expedients, especially when she saw no reason whatever for being ashamed of her actions. That the Bryants would bitterly condemn her choice, and strenuously urge her to retract her consent, she fully anticipated; but this conviction, which would have led a timid and irresolute girl to delay the communication of her purpose, only prompted the strong-minded Helen to a more immediate dis-

where I  
sally at  
dining in  
kitchen  
at once, in  
guilty of a  
real nervous  
period for a  
for you."

"Nervous?"  
nervous. I have  
up to one of  
fluctuating mood  
morning."

"My intellect  
but to domestic;  
here at Eagle W

should one mince the matter?—that I'm going to be married."

"Married!" simultaneously ejaculated both auditors, the aunt suddenly replacing her lifted wine glass on the table, while the uncle popped his nether jaw, and for a minute ceased to masticate. The former, however, presently recovering herself, tossed off her temper, looked significantly at her husband, and then said, with a chuckling laugh, "Tush! Well! a nod's as good as a wink to a blind man. I did not expect you and he would have come to an understanding so rapidly, but I'll bet a guinea that I can name the happy couple."

"I rather think not," replied Helen, laughing.

"Booh! don't tell me. Didn't I give him the hint myself?—and haven't I been constantly nudging him on to strike up to you, until he seems to have struck while the

iron was hot. Come, come, Helen ! you can't deceive me ; I can see as far into a mill-stone as most people. You may finish your cold pork, my dear Mr. B.—you 've no call to be alarmed ; so far from it quite the reverse, and thanks to me for the whole of it. Now then, child ! if I don't describe your sweetheart to the very life, without naming him, I give you leave to call me a blind buzzard."

"I shall be glad to have a specimen of your skill in divination," laughed Helen.

"In the first place, then, he is young, and genteel, and good-looking, and clever, rather above the middling size, with dark curling hair."

"Right ; a palpable hit !" said Helen, somewhat surprised.

"You got acquainted with him under this roof ! you had a sneaking kindness for him from the very first ; he is the very man of all others that Mr. B. and myself would have

chosen for your husband, and his Christian name begins with an A."

Helen, who really began to imagine that her secret was discovered, though she could not at all account for her aunt's evident delight at the match, when she had anticipated nothing but the most furious opposition, was too much confused for the moment to make any reply.

"Ha! is it so? I have hit the right nail on the head, have I?" cried the exulting aunt, as she snapped her fingers and chuckled aloud.

"Ha! ha! ha! let me alone for smelling out a rat. My dear Mr. B., I congratulate you; this is what we have all along been wishing. It's all owing to me. You must confess I always was an uncommon good manager. Well, well, Helen dear! you needn't blush and look so sheepish; there's nothing to be ashamed of—it will be a particular good match for you, I can tell you that. Mr. B. and I most gladly give our consent to it; and I think we can

both promise that you will never repent your bargain, but find a most eligible and excellent husband in our dear Ambrose."

"Ambrose!" ejaculated Helen — "What Ambrose?"

"Why, Ambrose Bryant, to be sure! our son, the captain. Only think of the young slyboots keeping it all so snug!"

"Snug, indeed," resumed Helen; "for he never opened his lips to me on the subject."

"What do you mean, child? you speak in riddles. To whom, then, in the name of fate, are you going to be married?"

"To Mr. Alfred Hunter!" said Helen, slowly and distinctly.

For some seconds utter amazement again deprived both her auditors of their breath, which they had no sooner recovered, than they repeatedly ejaculated the word "Hunter!" in various tones of incredulous and increasing wonderment.

elen !” at length wheezed the agitated with a reproachful look, “you are much of bantering and quizzing ; I always am so. This is no time and no subject for laughing.”

I am quite aware of it, and I never was serious in my life. Allow me, in all the sincerity of truth, to repeat that I am engaged to Hunter.”

Bryant looked inquiringly in her face, being convinced that she was perfectly sincere, he thought it best to put an end to the matter once by blurting out, “Why the fellow is a lame duck, a bankrupt, hasn’t a single penny not worth a brass button ;” after which he assumed the conclusive look of a man who has made a point that he has advanced an unanswerable objection.

“All this I am perfectly aware,” said he calmly : “and it is the more fortunate, therefore, that I have money enough for both.”

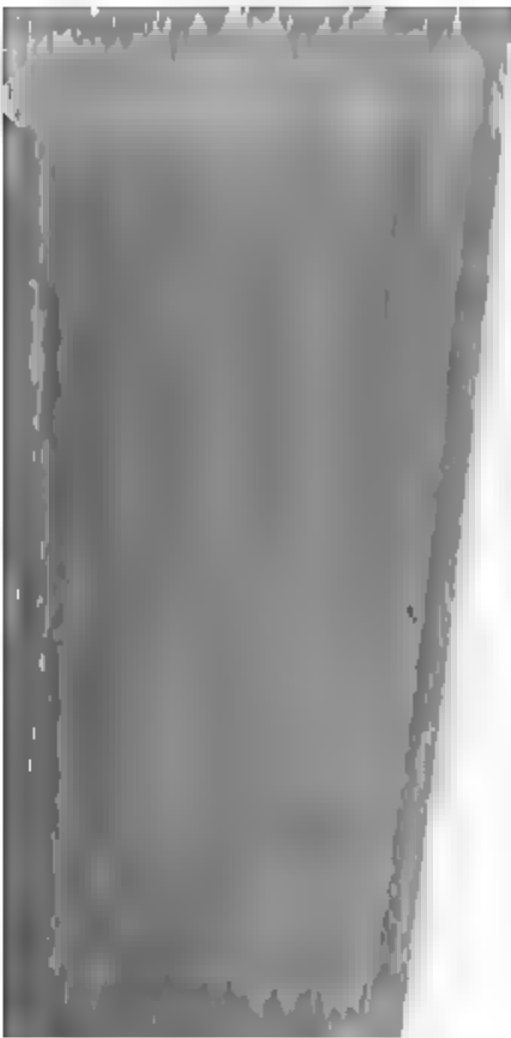


‘Because you do not recollect that there are two sorts of pride — that which envies and retards the dignity of another, and that which is solely jealous to maintain its own. Mr. Menter can fall without stooping.’

‘But *you* will do both if you throw yourself away upon him, and make a fool of yourself besides. Well! I did think a niece of mine would have had a better taste, and not show herself such a poor, mean-spirited thing; but what will all your friends say, what will the world say, if you make such a scandalous bad match?’

I know what they ought to say; and therefore I shall be perfectly indifferent to their censures, if they say what they ought to say.”

‘This palavering is all gammon,’ cried the faithful wharfinger. ‘You’re a silly girl, and your fellow’s a scamp, who will make ducks and drakes of your property, and I’ll never,



"I am  
willingly  
own mist  
"Ay, ay  
I give you  
tune-hunte  
drunkard, a  
conceited, a  
worse than a  
piece, and m  
when you ca  
fish swindle y  
e'en go to th  
don't let him  
all."

It was, perha

ed cheeks showed that she was prepared to  
icate with a proper spirit her own right of  
ce, as well as the character of her lover,  
outrageously assailed.

**END OF VOL. II.**

**LONDON :**  
**MOORE, JUN., LEICESTER STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.**



# JANE LOMAX;

OR

## A MOTHER'S CRIME.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "BRAMBLETYE HOUSE."

"REUBEN APSLEY," &c.

———" Was 't not to make thee great,  
That I have run, and still pursue, these ways,  
That hale down curses on me? "

MASSINGER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# JANE LOMAX.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ Surely we must be  
Most strong in virtue, if we can give up,  
After a life of dreary desolation,  
All that we pined for in our earlier days—  
A kindred spirit mingling with our own—  
To fill the happiness of others’ hearts.”

ELEN, not wishing to disturb Rose May-  
by communicating the recent conversation  
between her uncle and aunt, and their indig-  
nation at her intended marriage with Alfred  
Bryant, had been lost for some time in a pro-  
found reverie; when her cogitations were  
suddenly interrupted by the unceremonious  
entrance of Captain Bryant.

Vexed at this intrusion, and the more so as she immediately concluded that he came to pest her with unwelcome advice, or still less agreeable addresses, she was preparing to give him a somewhat uncourteous dismissal, when her anticipations and her anger were both dispersed by his exclaiming, with a cordial smile and a familiar nod, "What, Helen! and so you have had a regular set-to, yard arm and yard arm, with the governor and the old lady, and turned them to sheer off, have ye? I must n't marry, you know, must n't plot or rebel against my commanding officers; but hang me if I am not heartily glad you have made so good a choice of a husband, and have stuck to it like a brave girl; and if I can lend a hand in bringing you both into port, without flying in the face of the old folks, say but the word, tell me how I can serve you, and I'm your man."

"Ten thousand thanks for your good wishes,

claimed Helen ; “ and, should I have occasion  
your assistance, I will embrace your offer  
frankly as it is made.”

“ You ’re a noble-hearted, generous lass,”  
sumed the captain, “ for taking up poor  
hunter, now that he is down in the world,  
and every body turning their backs upon him.

know him well, and though he is not fit  
for a wharf clerk — no more was I, for that  
matter — and carries his nose a little too high,  
I can vouch for his being as good and ho-  
nourable a fellow as ever lived. He ’s a  
gentleman, every inch of him ; I always had  
real regard for the chap ; and he shan’t be  
driven adrift, though it be by my own father,  
without my throwing him out a rope.”

While Helen had been waging battle in de-  
fence of her lover, she had kept every feeling,  
except that of a momentary resentment, in  
perfect subjection ; but this cordial and unex-  
pected testimony to his good qualities com-

pletely melted her heart, and deprived her of her self-possession.

The tears glistened in her eyes, and her voice trembled with emotion, as she faltered, "Words cannot tell you, Captain Bryant, how gratified I am by your favourable opinion of Mr. Hunter, how grateful I feel for your friendly offers. Your kindness is the more acceptable, because I had reason to believe that you came upon a much less agreeable errand."

"What! — you thought I was coming to make love to you myself, I suppose. Ay, that's what you girls are always expecting, just as if there was nothing else for a fellow to do. Well, so I should if I had followed mother's advice, but I'm not such a fool. Too fond of the Charming Kitty to think of a wife just now; and if I did, shouldn't choose you, spite of your fortune. Beg pardon, always say what I think, but you are not one of my

sort. There's no accounting for tastes, you know."

"You need not apologise," said Helen; "and to prove to you that I am not offended at your frankness, I will ask one little favour, which has this moment occurred to me. If I am not mistaken, Mr. Hunter has, upon several occasions, been under obligation to you for pecuniary assistance?"

"Has he? well, perhaps he may. I had almost forgotten it; but I have no doubt he always repaid me punctually and honourably."

"In his present situation," resumed Helen, "his finance may need a little replenishment; and as there would be an indelicacy, perhaps an impropriety, in my offering to become his banker, you would much oblige me by conveying to him this hundred pound note, as if it were a temporary loan from yourself. It may spare some pains, both to Mr. Hunter's feelings

"You may rest, if you will, lead yourself to this  
 friendly reception."

"Save your generous heart! Let me shake  
 hands with you. I would go through fire and  
 water to serve you and hang me, if I don't  
 almost begin to envy Hunter his good luck.  
 Give me the note — I will take it to him in-  
 stantly, for I am anxious to shake hands with  
 him, too, and congratulate him on his making  
 so rich a prize."

And went the good-natured captain, not, how-  
 ever, so exactly his commission in strict ac-  
 cordance with his instructions, for, as he saw  
 no reason whatever for concealing the source of  
 the gift, and desisted to assume the smallest  
 merit that did not belong to him, he resolved  
 that Helen should have all the credit of her  
 beneficence.

The struggle of emotions by which Hunter  
 had been overcome when he rushed from the  
 presence of his mistress yielded to calmer and

more complacent feelings as he returned homewards.

“Thank Heaven ! it is over,” he mentally ejaculated. “I have done my duty — painful as it was ; the effort has been made, and my mind feels relieved. Rose, I am sure, will penetrate and approve my motives—will appreciate the sacrifice I have made. It is better, infinitely better, for both of us. We shall now be separated for life—gradually we shall forget one another. Forget !—forget Rose Mayhew ! Yes, I ought—I must—I will ! Henceforward all my thoughts shall be devoted to the happiness of the generous Helen. What a noble frankness in the confession of her regard for me, what winning condescension in giving me her hand ! Were I ever to forget her, I should be the most culpable as well as the most ungrateful of mortals.”

These reflections assumed a still more soothing tone as he drew near home, and

reflected on the present delight which his tidings would diffuse, as well as the long prospect of future tranquillity and enjoyment which would be opened to his family by his contemplated union.

Light was his step as he entered the parlour, and his heart yearned within him as, drawing them to his bosom, and tenderly embracing them, he exclaimed, "Mother! Harriet! this is the first happy moment I have experienced since our reverses. Never, no not for a single instant, have I been able to banish the tormenting thought that I was the author of all your sore trials, and of the deep sorrows which you in vain endeavoured to conceal from me. It is now in my power to make some atonement for the wrongs, the cruel, though unintentional, wrongs that I have done you. Our humiliating struggles with poverty and disappointment are about to cease. Helen Owen accepts me for her husband. This, my dearest Harriet, secures your

piness, for Holloway's parents will now  
ly consent to his marriage; and indeed I  
inclined to think, from Helen's minute  
uries on the subject, and my knowledge of  
character, that the generous girl, as soon  
she possesses the power, will replace the  
ion of which you were so unfortunately  
rived, and thus enable Holloway to become  
immediate partner in the house of busi-  
ness."

poor Harriet could only press her brother's  
d to her heart, and weep her gratitude;  
le the mother, in a transport of tenderness  
joy, laughed and cried by turns, utterly  
ble to decide upon what point she should  
n her congratulations, or how give vent to  
thoughts which crowded upon her in that  
crous jumble of the trivial and the serious,  
pertinent and the inapposite, which so often  
e to her rambling discourse the semblance  
cross-reading.

“ Dear Helen, dear Alfred ! ” she exclaimed  
“ you always were the best of sons—and such  
a great heiress, too ! Only to think ! —gene-  
rous girl ! — I congratulate you, my dear boy !  
Providence is very good to us, and I’m sure we  
ought to be grateful. May Heaven shower  
down its choicest — La ! how that tiresome  
donkey keeps braying at the Linseed Mills !  
They say it ’s a sign of rain, and I *do* think we  
*shall* have a shower soon, for my corns have  
been shooting all the morning.”

“ If my hopes be not disappointed,” said  
Hunter, “ and I am sure Helen will do her  
best to realize them, your future days, my dear  
mother, will be as happy and tranquil as your  
earlier life ; and henceforth we shall only look  
back upon our troubles and trials to be thankful  
that we have passed them.”

“ And perhaps, Alfred, we may find reason  
to be thankful that we have had them ; we  
shall all be the better for them, I dare say. And

shall we go back to live and die at dear Monk-well? The old house remains just as we left it, furniture and all, and it's to be let for half its value. Dear, dear! I do believe I should kiss the very doorposts, and weep for joy if I could again call it our's, for I love every chair and table it contains, and often think of the garden and the sundial, and the seat under the walnut-tree, till my very heart aches. It was your poor father's wish that we should never leave it. Heigho! well do I remember when he was lying on his death-bed, and Pug was standing on a chair beside him, looking wistfully in his face; he whined and stretched out his paw—that is, the dog did—and he turned to me and said in a faint voice, (your father, I mean) I'm sure I think I hear him now as he exclaimed—Pug! Pug! you mustn't pick that greasy bone on the carpet; what will Mrs. Tibbs say? take it from him, Harriet—Yes, your father, as I was telling you, said, 'I wish

you to remain as long as you can at Monkwell, and to keep on the same servants ; and as to the dumb beasts—' here his pains came on, and he never spoke distinctly again ; but I knew what he meant : he wished me to keep the dog and cat, as an emblem and memorial, like, of our long and happy union ; and so I will, please God ; and these plants, too, that were in his bed-room when he died. Welladay ! nobody knows how many tears I have shed upon their leaves, while trimming them of a morning, and thinking of the dear hand which used to do the same, and which is now—''

The involuntary twitching of her compressed lips prevented the completion of the sentence, and the poor widow sate with her eyes fixed upon the carpet, lost in the recollection of her past happiness, until the tears trickled unconsciously down her cheeks.

“ Every arrangement as to our future mode of life,” said the son, “ must, of course, depend

on Helen; I know her to be fond of the country, and I see no reason to suppose that she would object to Monkwell as our permanent residence. How much *I* should be gratified by such a selection, it is needless for me to state, especially as we should then be within an easy distance of my friend Holloway and our dear Harriet—”

“La! so we should!” cried the mother, “and we could drive over to see her as often as we liked, in — the sugar-basin, Harriet! move it from the shelf — quick — quick! do n’t you see Tabby is clawing at it?—Dear, dear! how glad I shall be to sit once more in the curtained pew of a Sunday, and to think that I shall be buried at last under the great yew tree, and lay my bones beside those of — Punch and Judy in the street again! why they passed only an hour ago. Well, it is comical now, is n’t it, to see how cleverly they catch the cudgel when they toss it to one another?”

CHAPTER II.

“ What find I here? What demi-god  
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?  
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,  
Seem they in motion?”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

MARY LOMAX did not limit her sympathy to mere expressions of good will, cordial and sincere as they were, but took instant and active steps for overcoming all the difficulties that still stood in the way of her friend, and which Helen, consistently with a due regard to her own dignity, could not well have attempted to remove.

There would have been an indelicacy, under present circumstances, in her visiting Mrs.

Edward, whose son, on the other hand, could not be removed at Eagle Wharf. In this dilemma Mary essentially befriended both parties. Mr. and Mrs. Lomax, willingly acceding to her request, frequently invited Helen and Edward to dine and pass the day with them. Edward Barrow, as already stated, had become almost an inmate at Cypress House, and thus during several weeks, the two lovers and their mistresses, enjoying long and frequent interviews, and daily more and more delighted with each other's society, gave themselves up to that entrancing interval of courtship, which a distinguished writer, himself a married man, has pronounced to be the best honeymoon.

In the brief snatches of friendly intercourse allowed by this seclusion, Helen marked with deep regret a distressing change in the deportment and character of Rose, who now confined herself to her own room with a rigour that almost amounted to imprisonment. She

was often abstracted and in tears ; and, when tenderly questioned as to the cause of her sorrow, would take offence, and reply with a petulant captiousness quite at variance with her usual demeanour. Such was her irritability that the smallest contradiction or disappointment excited her temper to vehemence and weeping.

Unsettled both in body and mind, she could neither remain long in one place, nor pursue her customary occupations, except at short and broken intervals. Fretful, impatient, and unhappy, she shunned even the society of Helen, betaking herself to solitude, and exhibiting an air of mysteriousness and reserve in all her movements. And yet so changeful were her moods, that she would sometimes throw herself into the arms of her friend, embrace her with a passionate fondness, supplicate pardon for her peevishness and estrangement, and chat with her in all the

removing themselves of their former confinement.

Longer than she regretted this capricious act in her mind. Helen seldom intruded into her room, especially when she found that she had reason to secure its inviolability by locking herself in. On one occasion, however, having some communication to make relative to her approaching marriage, she proceeded to her apartment and finding the door ajar, passed in.

There was not there, but her drawing materials not yet put away, showed that she had just been pursuing her favourite amusement. What was the astonishment of Helen, as she approached the table, to see lying on it a miniature of Hunter, the likeness perfect, and the painting of the most finished and exquisite description! Thrilling with surprise and pleasure, for she instantly concluded that it was intended as a marriage present for herself, she

was hanging over and admiring the picture, when Rose re-entered the apartment, and had no sooner caught sight of Helen, than with flashing eyes and kindling cheeks she ran up to her, snatched the miniature rudely from her hand, and exclaimed in an angry and almost menacing voice : — “How dare you pry into my secrets? How dare you intrude into my room?”

“Dare!” repeated Helen, not less amazed than hurt at the agitation and vehemence of her friend. “If I am an unwelcome visitant, I will immediately withdraw; but, before I do so, allow me to assure you that I had not the remotest intention of prying into your secrets, or intruding upon your privacy.”

At this remark, uttered in a tone of calm displeasure, Rose, recollecting as quickly as she had forgotten herself, sank upon a chair, shook her locks over her downcast eyes, clasped her hands imploringly together, and stammered

out :—" Pardon, pardon—dear, dearest Helen, forgive me ! I had intended, I had thought—but, overcome at seeing you here — the surprise ——."

" Enough, enough," interposed Helen, affectionately pressing her uplifted hands :—" I now see and understand it all. You had intended this beautiful miniature as a little surprise for me, a wedding present, perchance; and the disappointment of having your secret prematurely detected put you for the moment into a pet. Am I right in my conjecture?"

Incapable of asserting an untruth, the confused girl evaded a direct reply by exclaiming :—" Bear with me, I beseech you; pity and forgive me. In sooth, I cannot account for my own unbridled petulance. Would you believe that at the instant I could scarcely refrain from striking you? I fear you will no longer love me; and I almost begin to hate myself, for I am become ever peevish and irritable, and

occasionally, as you have just witnessed, almost ungovernable. I sometimes fear I shall go mad."

"My own, my darling Rose!" cried Helen, repeating her embrace; "do you imagine that you can be less dear to me in sickness than in health? This irritability, and the unusual and exquisite keenness of your senses, which others, as well as myself, have lately noticed, are but so many evidences of disease. Your mind sympathizes with the morbid state of your health, and I look forward with pleasure to a change of air and of scene as the best remedies for your complaint."

"I had just finished—I hope you will accept it," said the still agitated Rose, who seemed not to have listened to what her friend had been remarking.

"Are you speaking of the miniature? I accept it with delight, and shall ever value it as a memorial of your friendship. But, in the

name of wonder, my dear little enchantress, how did you manage to paint it? and without my knowledge, too! When and where did he sit to you? Did you smuggle him into the house? did you render him invisible to all eyes but your own bright orbs, or did you summon one of the Genii, and bid him whisk you through the air to the abode of Mrs. Hunter? There must have been sorcery or magic of *some sort.*”

“I have never seen him since he left the Wharf,” hesitated Rose, hiding her blushes beneath her pendent tresses. “I painted it entirely from memory.”

“What! this vivid likeness, this most speaking and animated portraiture, not only of his features, but of the mind and character stamped upon his intelligent countenance, have you delineated all these from memory alone? Astonishing! and almost as fearful as it is amazing, for I see in this preternatural acute-

ness of your faculties, a new proof of a disordered system. Why, why will you thus obstinately refuse to see a physician?"

"I need no better physician than yourself. You have just been prescribing change of air and of scene, and I shall very shortly follow your advice."

This was said in an emphatic tone, and with a significant air, which her friend did not immediately notice, for her eye had again fallen upon the painting, over which she hung, scrutinizing its minutest touches with an increasing wonderment and delight.

"So, then, it was for this," she exclaimed, "that you immured yourself so often and so long in your own room; it was for my gratification that you forsook all your ordinary pursuits, and ran the risk of still further injuring your health, already so delicate and precarious. Dear girl! how shall I ever repay you for a kindness so considerate and devoted!"

Poor Rose, who had, in truth, painted the miniature for herself, and who felt, therefore, that she neither deserved the gratitude nor the caresses lavished upon her, shrunk from them without daring to confess the reason of her repugnance, further than by pleading a bad headache.

“It has, doubtless, been occasioned by your stooping so long over your painting,” said Helen; “and, since you say it is now quite finished, I will secure you against any increase of your malady, by bearing off its cause.”

So saying, she kissed and again repeatedly thanked her for her most acceptable present, and left the apartment, carrying the miniature with her.

Hunter, whose pride disinclined him to ask favour of any sort, and who felt that, in the impending marriage, he had nothing whatever to offer in return for all the manifold advantages he would derive from it, shrank with a sensi-

tive delicacy from any attempt to influence the decisions of Helen as to their future mode of life.

In one of their confidential colloquies, however, it seemed as if she had penetrated the wishes of himself and his mother; for she turned the conversation to the subject of Monkwell, their former residence; and gracefully appearing to ask, while she was conferring a favour, inquired whether he would object, since she herself had a decided repugnance to a London life, to take up his abode once more in the ancient dwelling-place of his family.

“Nothing could be more delightful to me,” eagerly exclaimed Hunter; “and, if I have hitherto refrained from alluding to this subject, it was solely in the fear that I might be putting a constraint upon inclinations which I wish in every respect to study and to follow.”

“To succeed in that object, you must be frank in every thing, and state your desires as

unreservedly as I do mine. At this very moment I come to you as a petitioner, and I shall prefer my suit like a bold and sturdy beggar. You do not pique yourself, I believe, upon your skill as a frugal manager ; I myself am utterly unversed in all the mysteries of housekeeping ; under such auspices our fortune, competent as it is, might prove insufficient to secure us against embarrassment. An utter stranger, besides, at Monkwell, I shall feel as if I had dropped from the clouds, and shall sigh for some elderly *chaperone* to introduce me to the many families in the neighbourhood with whom you are acquainted. Now, what a comfort it would be to me, what an advantage to both of us, if dear Mrs. Hunter would come and live with us, and not only undertake those domestic duties, which I am so little qualified to perform, but enact the friendly part of my guide, companion, and mistress, in the manner I have pointed out."

“ A thousand thanks, my generous Helen !” cried Hunter, snatching her hand and pressing it to his lips :—“ You have anticipated the wish that was of all others the dearest to my heart. Most deeply do I feel your delicate kindness ! I only fear that, if you thus heap favours upon me, I shall become as bankrupt in gratitude as I am in fortune.”

“ Then, let it not be considered as a favour at all ; it was not so intended ; and, since we are both of us too proud to be under obligation to one another, our domestic arrangements shall assume the more independent form of compromise and exchange. Thus Alfred Hunter, on the one part, nominates his mother as a perpetual resident and inmate at Monkwell ; and Helen Owen, on the other hand, claims the same privilege for her friend, Rose Mayhew.”

“ Rose Mayhew !” ejaculated Hunter, colouring deeply, and starting with surprise.

“ Yes, Rose Mayhew. It is an old agree-

ment between us that whichever married first should receive the other as a companion in her house."

"Rose Mayhew!" reiterated Hunter, scarcely conscious of what he was uttering.

"Ay; is there any thing so Gorgon-like in the image conjured up to you by the mention of her name, that you should look thus confounded and amazed?"

"Oh no, no, no!" cried Hunter, endeavouring to collect himself; "quite the contrary; she is every thing that is—an inmate—a resident, did you say?"

"Yes; I would wish her to be considered as belonging to our family, not less than your mother."

"Your wishes, dear Helen, must, of course, be mine; but this arrangement is so strange, so unexpected, so ——, does it not strike you that there will be something very awkward, very objectionable, in having ——."

His embarrassment prevented the completion of the sentence, to which, however, Helen promptly answered by exclaiming : — “ Awkward ! objectionable ! what, in having as a dweller among us the bewitching Rose Mayhew ? You amaze me. I really do not understand you. I should have thought that you would have been delighted at the proposition, instead of conjuring up difficulties where none whatever exist.”

“ I have no right to object to any thing ; I merely ventured to suggest—I was only apprehensive that ——.”

“ Fiddle-faddle ! I will not have you apprehend any thing but pleasure and gratification from the society of so charming, so gifted, a creature. She is utterly without fortune, or protectors ; so that, on her account, not less than on my own, I must faithfully adhere to our agreement. Allow me to add that it would be ingratitude on your part, were you, upon this occasion,

to entertain a thought that would interfere with it, for you possess not in the whole world a friend more true, more cordial, more zealous, and more persevering, than Rose Mayhew."

"I believe it, I believe it," cried Hunter, deeply affected; "but I know not how I have merited her regard."

"Oh, with what energy has she fought your battles!" continued Helen, kindling into fervour, as she sang the praises of her friend:—"With what an impassioned eloquence did she extenuate your frailties, and vindicate you against every evil report! I know not whether my declaration will give her any additional title to your gratitude; but I can truly declare that I should never have consented to bestow myself upon you, but for the active interference and the almost incessant persuasions of Rose Mayhew."

Hiding his face in his hands, in order to conceal as much as possible the vehement

struggle of his feelings, Hunter could only ejaculate, "Noble—generous — magnanimous girl! God bless her!" Helen fortunately commenced a new eulogy of her *protégée*, which, affording him time to recover himself, he exclaimed, when she was again silent, "I have but one question to ask. Is Miss Mayhew a party to this arrangement?"

"I have never formally mentioned the subject to her, because I have always taken it for granted that she would adhere to our contract. Upon this point we will have an immediate explanation, though I cannot for a moment doubt that she will gladly perform her share of our engagement."

"If it be your wish and her's, I repeat that it must, of course, be mine also," said Hunter, who, in order to break off a conversation which was becoming every moment more painful and agitating to his feelings, pleaded an engagement, and hurried from the room.

“This is marvellous,” thought Helen to herself, when he had left her, “and not less disagreeable than strange. It is manifest, palpable, glaring, that he has some objection to Rose, which he hesitates to state; that he totally disapproves of my plan for domesticating her at Monkwell; and, though he has consented to it, has yielded with a woful bad grace. For some time past, indeed, I have noticed that he has cautiously shunned her society, and that she has equally avoided, unless when called upon to defend him, all mention of his name. Can he have quarrelled with her, can he have any personal objection ——? Impossible! one might as well object to an angel. I have heard of men who could not bear a rival, even of her own sex, in the affections of their wife. This must be the secret reason of the difficulties which he could not distinctly define, or which, as is more likely, he was ashamed to state. Hunter, I fear, has a spice of jealousy

in his disposition, and, as this failing is the result of a too sensitive and engrossing love, I ought not to judge it harshly. Neither ought I to yield to it too submissively. My compact with Rose shall be faithfully executed, and Hunter shall find that my attachment to my friend, fervent as it is, will never interfere with the more sacred and tender claims of the husband. The same sense of duty that makes me firm upon this point, will render me obedient to him upon every other."

As this subject was now paramount in her mind, Helen took the first opportunity of sounding the intentions of her friend, by stating the arrangement she had made relative to her future residence at Monkwell, and expressing a hope that it would prove agreeable to the wishes, and beneficial to the health, of Rose.

"My best, my dearest, my only friend!" exclaimed the latter, pressing Helen's hand to

her heart, and endeavouring to smile through her tears :—" I told you in a late conversation that I would take your advice, that I would seek a change of air and of scene, for the benefit of my declining health. I have done so, but it is not to Monkwell that I am about to remove— No, Helen, I feel that I have a grave, a sacred duty, to perform to you, to myself, to ——— to ———to another. The day of your marriage must be the day of our separation : we must part—the very word almost chokes me, but nothing ———."

" Separate — part !" ejaculated Helen in a tone of profound amazement ; " I do not understand you. Are you serious ?"

" Do not interrupt me, I beseech you," resumed Rose ; " and, when you have heard my statement, spare me, for pity's sake, spare me all appeal against a resolution which has been deliberately formed, and in which I shall inflexibly persevere, because it has been dictated

by my conscience and a solemn sense of duty. You will remind me, I know, of what you have termed the compact between us. It was no agreement upon my part. Often as it was urged by you, I never gave assent to it, except by my silence. For the generosity, the kindness, the forethought, that suggested it, I was duly grateful ; but I would never bind myself to an engagement, of which it was easy to anticipate that many circumstances might prevent the performance. This contingency has arisen. Ask not my reasons, question not my motives ; I must not, cannot, will not, be interrogated. Suffice it to state, once for all, that they are imperative and insuperable."

Not less hurt than surprised, Helen gazed inquiringly upon the countenance of her friend. Its expression of deep distress, mixed with an inexorable pertinacity of purpose, deterred her from disobeying her injunctions, especially



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which I shall gladly consult you, now that you are aware of my intentions."

"Companion!" exclaimed Helen. "My poor dear Rose! this will never, never, never do. Your delicate health, your exquisitely sensitive mind, utterly disqualify you for such an employment. Have you considered what it is to be the nurse rather than the companion of a sickly peevish old lady, whose inferiority to yourself, in every thing but fortune, will make you the more bitterly feel the sense of your dependence: who will render you the confidant of her revolting maladies, and the recipient of all her whims and ill-humours; who, because you are not a servant, will expect you to discharge those functions that a menial would refuse; to be answerable for the health of her cat, to wash her lap-dog, to minister to the wants of a screaming perroquet, and to clean out the cages of half-a-dozen canary-birds?"

“But every lady in want of a domestic inmate does not necessarily keep such a menagerie as you have been describing, nor is it indispensable that she herself should be a testy, capricious, and querulous invalid.”

“In that case, she will need no other companion than her own healthy mood and happy thoughts. As none but the halt and the infirm require a crutch, so you may depend upon it, dear Rose, that none but the mental cripple will advertise for a human walking-stick.”

“You are supposing an extreme and improbable case, and one to which, even were I doomed to experience it, I should be under no necessity of submitting longer than it suited my convenience. In fact, Helen, you are proving too much; you object to every thing that I propose. My mind, I tell you, is made up — firmly, definitively, irrevocably. I must not, cannot, will not, be thwarted.”

The mood of the speaker became changed,

her wan cheek reddened, her eye sparkled, she began to talk with an energy that almost amounted to exasperation, and rapidly paced the room in a state of excitement, which her friend, knowing its morbid source, could only pity and lament.

“ Well, my sweet Rose !” she exclaimed in a soothing tone ; “ you shall try this plan, since you have made up your mind to it, but only as an experiment, and upon the condition that, when you are tired of it, which, if I am any thing of a prophetess, will soon occur, you shall return to one whose house, whose arms, whose heart, will ever be open to receive you. Even now my very soul is sick at the thought of our separation.”

“ And do you think that I am at this moment lying upon roses ?” asked her friend in a mournful accent. “ I say nothing of my own sufferings, for I would not needlessly distress you, and I am silent about the long debt of

gratitude I owe you, not only because words would be utterly unavailing to express it, but because I am endeavouring to evince it in the most effectual manner, by tearing myself away from you."

"This I cannot pretend to decipher, dear Rose, nor do I understand you better when you talk of gratitude, since I feel, by the very fear of losing it, how much my happiness has depended on your society. Our pursuits, our pleasures, our little sorrows and disappointments, have for some years been almost identical. We have been more than sisters; never, never, as I fervently hope, shall we be less than friends, for, however the tide of life may separate us for the moment, I feel persuaded that the yearnings of our hearts will soon bring us together again. During the progress of your experiment, for I consider it as nothing else, I shall be cheered by this hope, as well as by the trust that your health will be benefited by

a change of air and scene. In this I shall have the greater confidence, if you will faithfully promise me, during your short exile, to consult some eminent physician."

"Yes, yes," cried Rose, with a sudden air of significant animation, "this I can, I do promise you. I hope soon to see one who is the most eminent of his tribe, one who has never failed to effect a cure, however inveterate the disease—one who has no sooner placed his finger on your pulse, than his friendly magic not only heals all the maladies that flesh is heir to, but all the sickness of the soul — one who needs not to be consulted a second time, for his patients suffer no relapse, and, being once cured, are cured for ever."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Helen, incredulously. "And who may he be, this marvellous practitioner? I should like to consult him myself."

"O no—no—no. I hope not—I hope not," cried Rose; "for his name is —— Death!"

And so saying, she glided out of the room, her eyes flaring, and her pale features lit up with a look of wild exultation, that struck a pang of sudden anguish and alarm to the heart of her friend.

CHAPTER III.

“ Full oft we see  
Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.”  
ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

ELEN, who had determined to remain under protection of Mr. Bryant until she came of age, was by no means sorry to receive the congratulations of her friends on the arrival of this important period ; for many circumstances latterly combined to render her abode at the Wharf more than usually disagreeable. Though both her uncle and her aunt had given her all attempts to dissuade her from her obstinate and wilful self-sacrifice, as they termed her approaching marriage, they carried on a

ARTHUR DE MAX looked on by a succession of sneers and grimaces in which were but coarse and vulgar faces, stained by disappointment, would have sufficed. Their conversation, rarely elevated, but generally levelled at her, was full of the same stale and modern instances, "warning the unhappy fate of such indiscreet young persons as had spurned the admonitions of their friends, and thrown themselves into the hands of fortune-hunters."

Sometimes the worthy couple would dilate, with an enormous parental pride, on the happiness and wealth which with them were convertible terms reserved for the fortunate woman who should be selected for a wife by their son ARTHUR. against whom, nevertheless, they would occasionally launch a sharp reproach for his omitting to secure the prize which they had been so carefully enriching for his capture, and had placed so purposely within his reach.

Whether or not Jacob Bryant, keen man of

business as he was, would have proved himself so diligent and so successful a manager of his ward's property, unless he had all along imagined that he was catering for the future wife of his own son, we cannot determine ; but certain it is that Helen herself was surprised at the unexpected accumulation of her fortune during her minority.

On the day following her twenty-first birthday, her guardian placed in her hands an account current, which did infinite credit, not only to his own financial skill and trustworthiness, but to the calligraphy of John Hoggens, the new clerk. He himself carefully read it over to her, explaining every item with a technical precision not always intelligible to his auditress, and, after having received from her a written acknowledgment of its accuracy, which she delivered with an expression of the most heartfelt gratitude for his good stewardship ; he accompanied her to the Bank, where

he transferred into her name, and made her enter her acceptance of it in the books, a large amount of stock which, at the price of the day, came to the exact fractional balance that was due to her.

All the way back to the Wharf was devoted to an exceedingly well meant, but equally tedious, lecture on the difficulty of acquiring, and the facility of dissipating, a fortune, coupled with the most earnest advice that in the marriage settlements the whole should be strictly tied up, so as to protect it from the extravagance or perilous speculations of her husband.

Helen was neither covetous nor purse-proud, and it was precisely on that very account that she was highly gratified at finding herself so much richer than she had expected, since her money would enable her, without sensibly encroaching on her 'own income, to replace Harriet's marriage portion, a design she had for some time past entertained ; while the resi-

due was more than sufficient to support a handsome establishment at Monkwell, and to restore to the name and family of Hunter the full consideration it had formerly enjoyed in the neighbourhood. To mark her gratitude to Mr. Bryant, she presented to him four massive silver dishes, a present the more acceptable and opportune because the annual dinner to his brethren of the Fishmongers' Company was now approaching.

In conformity with the anxious wish of Mrs. Hunter, who had set her whole heart upon the measure, it was determined that the triple marriages of Helen with her son, of Holloway with her daughter, and of Mary Lomax with Barlow, should be solemnized at the same time, and in the same church.

Some little delay intervened from Holloway's inability to leave his business in the country ; but the nuptial day had at length been fixed by all parties, and the reader must imagine

the bustle, preparation, and anxiety, that now agitated the inmates of Eagle Wharf, of Cypress House, and of the lodgings of Mrs. Hunter, whose incessant locomotion, whose ludicrous cross-purposes, and concurrent fits of laughing and crying, might have easily persuaded a stranger that she was mad with joy.

To add to the busy interest of the moment, Evelyn's father was immediately about to launch a large East Indiaman from his dock below Blackwall, a circumstance which he deemed of scarcely less importance than the marriage of his son.

Of the ceremonies and festivities usually attendant upon a launch few can be fully aware, unless they happen to have resided in the vicinity where such scenes are displayed. For some time the whole neighbourhood had been engaged in hiring boats, and making arrangements to witness the spectacle ; and, as sight-seeing and amusements were now the order of

the day with the happy and bustling Mrs. Hunter, she proposed that a party should be formed to sail or row down to Blackwall, and, after having seen the launch, to seek some pleasant spot on the banks of the river, where they might land, and partake of a *pic-nic* dinner.

Her proposal was carried by acclamation, and orders were given for preparing the handsome pleasure-boat in which Benjamin Lomax had been accustomed to take his little excursions on the water. Much to his regret, his increasing malady, which had latterly confined him to his room, would not allow him to accompany his friends. Barlow's parents could not absent themselves from the dock, especially as they were to have a large dinner-party and a ball at night; the Bryants had a boat of their own, wherein the portly wife, fine as a lady mayoress, took her station, with her pursy husband by her side, while their servant, in a flaming new livery, was squeezed into the stern; Lomax,

who had not yet recovered from the agony of terror excited by the reported return to Europe of Edward Ruddock, dreaded publicity of all sorts, and refused to pass beyond the walls of Cypress House.

Holloway had not yet arrived in London. The party, therefore, which was to be chaperoned by Mrs. Hunter, consisted of her son and daughter, Barlow and Mary Lomax, Helen and her friend Rose. The latter had for some time resisted every solicitation to join the excursion; but a secret curiosity to witness the deportment of Hunter as the betrothed husband of Helen, the yearnings of an affection which was by no means extinguished, and the desire to enjoy, possibly for the last time, the society of the two beings who were dearest to her upon earth, so far silenced the objections of her better judgment, that she at length consented to the wishes of her friend.

One other individual contrived, unwelcome

as he was to most of them, to intrude himself into the party, and by his presence produced results equally important and unexpected. No sooner was the excursion proposed, than Jasper Pike, who affected a juvenile delight in all parties of pleasure, but who, on this occasion, was in reality attracted by the prospect of seeing the launch, and partaking of the subsequent feast at Mr. Barlow's without paying for boat-hire, begged to be included, offering to act as steersman, for which office he had qualified himself, by his frequent trips in a friend's boat, to eat white bait at Greenwich.

His proposal was received with an expressive silence, which the speaker, who was by no means easily repulsed, construed into a general acquiescence, and immediately began, with his usual flippant and importunate forwardness, to lay down the whole plan of proceeding for the day. The discovery that the dinner was to be a *pic-nic*, to which he would be expected to

contribution. threw him all aback, but it was now too late to recede ; and, making a virtue of necessity, he liberally offered to supply the bread, declaring that he had known several dinners entirely spoilt by the omission of this indispensable article. Mary and Helen, detecting the meanness of his motive in this selection, interchanged smiles sufficiently significant to be observed by Pike, who had the grace to add that he had merely mentioned that particular article because he could procure it from a baker in his neighbourhood of a quality superior to any other in London.

Every thing on the morning of the launch wore a gay, exhilarating, and auspicious aspect. It was that delightful season of the year when the spring is just ripening into summer ; the morning sun threw a golden bloom over the waters in the direction of Blackwall, where an eastern breeze had cleared the atmosphere, so that the innumerable boats gliding along the

river, and the successive tiers of shipping, many of them decorated with flags in honour of the occasion, were brightly and distinctly visible. Rolling slowly and majestically across a forest of masts, the congregated vapours still hung over all the westward portion of the city, assuming a roseate tinge from the beams of the sun, and imparting, to the shrouded metropolis, as widely scattered towers, domes, and steeples, gradually emerged from the dense mass, a mysterious vastness and grandeur which stimulated the imagination, and elevated the whole scene into sublimity.

When they arrived at the place of rendezvous, Mrs. Hunter and her party found Pike waiting for them, with a large basket hanging on his arm, containing, as they inferred from its bulk, a plentiful supply of the bread which was to form his contribution. This he carefully deposited in the stern of the boat, and then, with a brisk, dapper air, meant to be particularly

friction and a smart vulgarity which he mis- took for politeness, tendered his assistance to the ladies and bustled about the stowage of the hamper and hand-baskets laden with the other materials of their dinner.

In a short time all was arranged, the company took their seats, and the boat floated off, the watermen plying the oars, for the state of the wind did not allow them to hoist sail, a circumstance not a little consolatory to the timid Pike, who sat bolt upright in the stern, the basket between his feet, the tiller strings in either hand, while he looked sharply out to the right and left, in search of any approaching danger.

Boats of all sorts, many of them adorned with awnings and gay streamers, floated rapidly down the stream, the faces within lighted up with pleasant anticipation, while the banks on either side resounded to cheerful voices, merry greetings, and vivacious laughter.

The party whose histories we are narrating formed a partial exception to the general hilarity. There is a deep and heartfelt happiness, which, by awakening sentiments of devout gratitude to Heaven, partakes much more of a serious than a lively character. Such were the present feelings of our lovers, who were sobered by the approaching change in their mode of life, and the prospect of the felicity that awaited them.

Other and less grateful thoughts deepened the pensiveness of Hunter. He had not seen Rose for some time, and the deteriorated health expressed by her looks, combined with her manifest dejection, filled him with a sadness not altogether unmingled with self-reproach. Well might she wear a desponding aspect, poor girl! for she was mentally contrasting the happiness that surrounded her, with her own forlorn and desolate plight, with the wretchedness of her own disappointed and withered heart.

Of the countless throngs that gave gaiety to the river, every individual possessed either parents, relatives, or friends. She herself had no parent, no relative, and, with the solitary exception of Helen, from whom she was shortly about to part, perhaps for ever — she had no friend. Unprotected and unguided, she was to be thrown upon the wide world to fill an equivocal and dependent station, which could hardly fail to expose her to many mortifications, while it might not improbably subject her to trials and dangers which she hardly dared to contemplate, because she felt herself peculiarly unfitted to struggle with them. How little such reflections were calculated to raise her spirits, was evinced by her mournful silence, her downcast eyes, and her abstracted air.

Pike endeavoured to conceal his own apprehensions, from which he was never entirely free, by singing snatches of nautical songs, and

affecting a pert vivacity, while the benevolent Mrs. Hunter, her face beaming with complacency, and exclamations of wonder and pleasure for ever upon her lips, simpered, and laughed, and talked cross-readings for all the rest of the party.

The watermen repeatedly requested Pike not to hug the shore, but to steer the boat into the middle of the river, that they might have the full benefit of the tide, which was favourable.

“My good friends,” replied the bachelor, who could not even affect to think of any body but himself, “I never throw away a chance. *You* can doubtless swim—*I* cannot ; so that, in case of a capsize, we should not start fair. Upon occasions of this sort, you must be well aware that every lubber who can hire a craft pushes it into the middle of the stream, whether or not he can handle an oar or manage a sail. See how they are all huddled together, and how

easily some of them might run us down ! Why should we rush into danger ? ”

“ Danger ! ” echoed one of the boatmen, with a slight expression of contempt, “ where ’s the danger to come from ? ” And he then whispered to his comrade, “ I say, Tom, a shy bird that, ar’n’t he ? Never on the water afore, I reckon, though he handles the tiller so knowingly. He seems to be one o’ them chaps that may run ye aground, but won’t never run ye into any other scrape. ”

Little did the utterer of this averment dream that it was so speedily to be disproved. The fatality which almost invariably threw Pike into the very midst of peril from his over-anxiety to avoid it, was about to be alarmingly signalized.

Opposite Limehouse, a collier was hauling out of the tier, when the slacking rope broke, and, the tide swinging her rapidly round, her bowsprit was carried athwart the course of

the pleasure-boat, so as to threaten her mast. With common presence of mind and promptitude of hand, Pike might have steered clear of the coming danger ; but he had no sooner perceived its approach, than, abandoning the tiller rope, he hastily dived into the basket beneath his feet, whence he snatched a patent life-preserver, his invariable companion on all water excursions, and hastily threw it over his head. While struggling into it, in an agony of terror, the mast struck the collier's bowsprit, and a faint cry announced that the shock had thrown Rose into the water. Aroused from his deep reverie by the sound of her well known voice, Hunter was no sooner aware of the catastrophe, than he plunged headlong after her, exclaiming, " Rose ! my beloved Rose ! save her ! save her ! "

Assisting the action of the tide by the violence with which he sprang from the side of the tottering boat, it instantly capsized, and

the whole party, amid the loud screams of the females, were precipitated into the water. A crowd of boats hurried instantaneously to their assistance, and Helen, almost as soon as she had been immersed in the waves, found herself snatched from them, and sitting in a wherry, the people of which, in answer to her terrified inquiries, bade her be under no alarm for her friends, the whole of whom had been already rescued, without any other injury than a momentary struggle with the waters. Having received full assurance upon this point from a variety of witnesses, she earnestly entreated her rescuers to convey her immediately back to Eagle Wharf, a request which was met with the kindest and most prompt compliance.

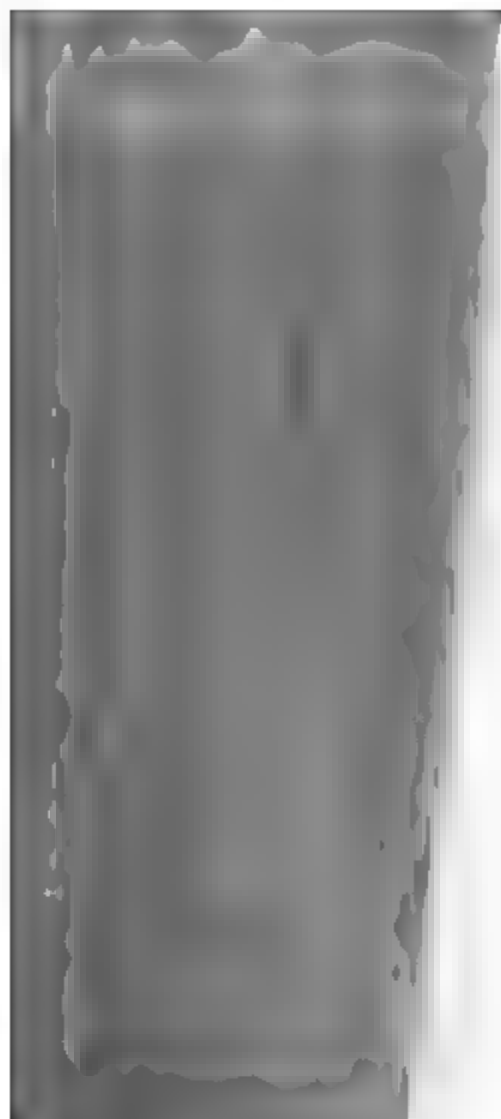
Just as they had put about for this purpose, a four-oared boat pulled alongside, on the seat of which Helen beheld her friend Rose reclining in an apparently unconscious state, while Hunter hung over her, almost distracted with

alarm, pressing her hand to his lips and to his heart, and wildly ejaculating, "Rose, my long, my secretly beloved Rose! speak to me, for God's sake! I shall go mad if I have rescued thee too late. Oh hear me, and give some signs of life, thou best, thou dearest, thou sole object of my affections!"

As if revived by the sound of his voice, the party thus passionately addressed opened her eyes, cast a bewildered look around her, and then, faintly exclaiming, "O Mr. Hunter, dear Mr. Hunter, is it you who have saved me?" sunk blushing into his arms, and was pressed in an ecstasy to his bosom.

At this juncture, some intervening boats shut them out from sight; but Helen had already seen and heard enough — too much! The whole scene swam indistinctly before her eyes; hollow murmurs rang in her ears; a sudden sickness of the heart oppressed her; and she fainted. When Helen recovered her

ending by her



## CHAPTER IV.

“——What! gone without a word?  
Ay, so true love should do; it cannot speak,  
For truth hath better deeds than words to grace it.”  
SHAKESPEARE.

EVELYN BARLOW, naturally singling out his loved Mary as the first object of his solicitude, supported her without much difficulty, for he was an expert swimmer, until they were taken up by one of the numerous small craft that thronged to their assistance. Mrs. Hunter and Harriet, after clinging together in some little peril, were rescued by another party. The fishermen held on to the capsized boat, until some of their comrades came to their assistance; and thus have we satisfactorily accounted

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mitted himself  
slipped along  
with his feet, w  
raised above the

unable, of course, to call for assistance, or to draw attention to his drowning state in any other way than by the rapid motion of his imprisoned feet. For some moments he escaped notice, the general anxiety being directed towards the females, so that he was almost at the last gasp, when the curiosity of a boatman being excited by the phenomenon of a pair of half boots, sole upwards, beating a sort of devil's tattoo in the air, he rowed up to the mysterious object, and, having righted the unlucky bachelor, hauled him, more dead than alive, into his wherry.

Instead of seeking to know whether the rest of the party were saved, Pike's first inquiry, when he recovered his senses, related to the extent of his own loss, an investigation of which the result was by no means satisfactory. His watch had slipped from his fob into the mud, to be wound up, perchance, by some lucky ballast-dredger ; and his ungrateful money, though

.

he loved it better (had seized the sail). Dreading the further, he was inevitably be entailed be put to bed at the conveyed, he bargained man to carry him in the notion that taken in by an experienced signing apothecary.

In his anxiety reached by other reached himself. in his wet clothes illness, that he was weeks, and had to and medicines—seeing a launch, a life-preserver.

We return to whose mind, who

the startling occurrences of the day, it would be utterly impossible to describe. At first, all was a bewildering and frightful chaos, a species of waking nightmare, in which every thing appeared horrible and revolting, but nothing true. It seemed too strange, too hideous, too impossible, to be real. But, as this wildering confusion passed away, and the actual events of the morning successively recurred to her, until the whole truth flashed with an electrical effect upon her memory, a whirlwind of conflicting emotions lacerated her mind, and convulsed her entire frame.

Inflamed, almost to momentary madness, by the feeling that she had been deceived, betrayed, and outraged — that a base conspiracy had been formed against her, in which the treacherous Hunter, and the still more perfidious Rose, were accomplices — that its unexpected detection, and the sudden breaking off of her marriage, on which she had instantly

to an impatient exaspera-  
tion in the thought of  
vengeance upon the culprit.

This storm of passion  
of a quick temperament  
merited and intolerable  
sided. Her heart showed  
assailants by which it had  
suffered: her better judg-  
ments recovered their  
seat from before her eye  
not only to trace the cause  
with a clear and undisturbed  
tardy, though full, justice  
friends whom she had  
sneeringly condemned.

several minutes' continuance, at the conclusion of which her spirit softened into tenderness and truth ; and the tears, which had hitherto been denied a vent, flowed unconsciously down her cheeks, as she exclaimed in a subdued and broken voice :

“ I see it all—I see it all—I see it all ! They loved one another from the very first — what could be more natural, more excusable ?— and their mutual estrangement was but an effort to conquer an unhappy passion, of which their deep and hopeless poverty forbade the indulgence. Hence the coldness, the struggles, the indecision of Hunter ; hence the waning health, the deep despondency, and the morbid capriciousness of Rose. Deluded, blind, besotted being that I was, not to see all this before ! And now that my eyes are torn open, what thousands of glaring proofs spring up on every side ! Not to me, as my fond vanity believed, not to me but to Rose did he direct his pas-

... and  
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... very  
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... and  
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... a susp  
... And the mi  
... was doubting  
... her love-lon  
... and objections of  
... at the time, w  
... come and li  
... this is now ch  
... (Oh ...

As Helen sate up in the bed, the unheeded tears still falling upon her clasped hands, she was for some time again lost in a deep and silent reverie, at the conclusion of which she resumed in a firmer tone of voice—

“Methinks I am now gifted with a keener penetration than usual, as some compensation for my past obtuseness ; for, if I mistake not, I can dive into the hearts of Hunter and of Rose, and explain their every action. For the happiness of his mother, of his sister Harriet, and even of Rose herself, he resolved to conquer his inauspicious attachment, and to offer his hand to one who never—who never—”

A returning gush of feeling prevented the completion of the sentence, and she fell back upon the bed, sobbing and weeping like a child. Presently, however, she recovered sufficient composure to continue.

“And Rose, who had discovered the state of my affections, as, indeed, she often told

me, magnanimously determined to sacrifice herself, and to go forth into exile and bondage for the happiness of her friend. She was not wrong, when she so mournfully anticipated her early death, for I know how fragile is her hold of life, and I am now confident that the struggle would have been fatal to her. This must not and shall not be. Generous Hunter my sweet, my darling, my high-souled Rose ye were made for one another; and not upon my account, now that I have at length detected your mutual devotement, not upon my account I solemnly swear, shall ye make misery and shipwreck of your whole future lives. Well do I foresee the extent of the martyrdom that awaits me; I must give up finally and for ever — yes, I must sever myself permanently from Hunter, from Rose, from Mary Lomax. Suddenly and violently must I be wrenched away from all that I love; my bleeding heart must be torn up by the roots; but I shall, at all events

ve the consolation of knowing that I have  
ne my duty, and that, in this dreadful trial, I  
ve acted in a manner worthy of myself, and  
the dear, dear friends from whom my hard  
e compels me to part for ever.”

An opportunity was now presented for  
alizing the lofty aspirations of her bosom ;  
nd the thought how she should most becom-  
gly take advantage of it, so as fully to meet  
r own benevolent wishes, and to convert  
e sneers or pretended compassion of the  
rld into a genuine admiration, supplied the  
y balm of which her lacerated feelings were  
the moment susceptible. To her own tem-  
ary sufferings she became partially recon-  
ed by the conviction that they would secure  
manent felicity to Hunter, to his sister, and  
Rose. At all times, the practice of virtue is  
the best solace for the afflicted ; by bestowing  
ssings upon others, we entail them on our-  
ves, a fact which was never more strikingly

exemplified than in the present experience of Helen, who passed the whole night sleeplessly, indeed, but not without complacency in arranging the scheme of beneficence, and the plan of action, to which she had already made up her mind.

Horton, the female servant who had lived with her since her girlish days, was an elderly widow, of acquirements much superior to her station, of an approved discretion, and devotedly attached to her young mistress, as well from gratitude for many favours, as from a long experience of her perfect amiability. The person Helen summoned to her room in the morning, and desired her to procure a glass coach for their immediate conveyance into the City. In vain did the good woman enlarge upon the imprudence of quitting the house on the day after her perilous immersion in the water.

Declaring, as was indeed true, that she

not suffer the smallest inconvenience from the accident, Helen peremptorily insisted upon being obeyed, and at an early hour proceeded accordingly to Mr. Bryant's stockbroker, who accompanied her to the Bank, where she transacted the business she had intended, and then returned to Eagle Wharf. How she was occupied during the remainder of that day, which was passed in the seclusion of her own room, will appear by the following letters :

“ My dear, dear Rose !

“ Knowing the acute, the exquisite, sensibility of your feelings, and the delicate state of your frame, wasted as it has been by a withering concealment and blighted affections, I almost tremble to think of the effect which may have been produced upon you by the shock and the disclosures of yesterday. Let me begin, therefore, by the tranquillizing assurance that, after having discovered your secret, and obtained a perfect clue to every thing which

and adoration, are added  
to all the magnanimous  
were about to make for me  
" After this declaration  
secret to say that I pard  
have done : and yet sure  
much, that calls for forgi  
ing the purity of your i  
your disinterested  
friendship, has nearly p  
ennia wherein the life-h  
perhaps of both, must  
one. O Rose. Rose ! kn  
secretly admired by Mr.  
but not less tenderly in r  
your name valuable to

object of his affections ; how could you urge a marriage which might have been attended with not less cruel disappointment to my heart and hope than to your own ? Yet why should I ask you ?

“ I know the exalted quality of your mind, the intense ardour of your friendship, and that knowledge solves every difficulty. Were you to inquire of me how I became so inconceivably blinded as not to perceive the real state of your affections, I should be utterly unable to furnish you a reply. These questions, however, need not now be mooted. Enough to know that we have all stood upon the edge of a precipice, and that we should all most devoutly thank Heaven, as I do from the very bottom of my soul, for enabling us to discover the danger before we were precipitated into the abyss.

“ Let us not look to the past, which offers so little on which we could wish to dwell, but to the future, where happier days, as I trust

marriage with Mr. Hunt  
solved for ever ; I have  
from all his engagements,  
*you* are to fill the place w  
pied.

“Methinks I see your  
you reach this passage of  
advanced nothing that is  
rally true. Henceforth you  
you are his betrothed, hi  
the presence of other witi  
did he passionately addre  
of his soul ; in the same  
him your dear Mr. Hunt  
into his arms. Not to

“ “ “ “

complishment of a marriage which would doubtless have occurred at an earlier period, had it not been prevented by one insuperable impediment.

“That obstacle is now removed. I have this morning transferred into your name a sum, which, by securing to you a moderate independence, while it will not raise you and your future husband above the motives to future exertion, will place you, according to my notions, in the most enviable situation that society affords. In the false position lately occupied by Mr. Hunter, his great and varied talents were rather a bane than an advantage to him. Be it your care, dear Rose, by directing them into a more honourable and appropriate channel, to realize your own prognostications, when you so strenuously maintained that all his infirmities, whether of temper or of conduct, were the sole result of the uncongenial element to which he was condemned.

ing myself. Scruple not  
say, do not even imagine  
any particular obligation  
never employ a portion  
that in securing the happiness  
of man on earth I most effectually  
fulfill its object, and I  
value much more, than  
self. My fortune provided  
anticipated. I am moderate  
you have often heard  
beyond competency is called  
the saying of the wise  
which we used to read of  
natural wealth; luxurious  
moreover.

England. Where I shall ultimately settle, I have not yet decided; but, whithersoever I may wander, I shall be accompanied by the faithful Horton, who is fully competent to discharge the double functions of my protectress and my companion.

“That I shall suffer at first in being torn away so rudely from you, from Mary Lomax, and from others whom I tenderly regard, I will not affect to deny; but my spirits, as you have sometimes experienced to your cost, are buoyant almost to exuberance, and I felt this morning, while signing my name at the Bank, a lightness and elasticity of heart, which I accepted as an augury of the happiness I hope permanently to enjoy, when I shall have had time to recover from the shock of recent occurrences.

“The hardest, the most cruel, the most heart-rending word of all remains to be written. We must part, dear, dear Rose, part to meet

no more. In the necessity of this decision, you will instantly acquiesce. since you, yourself, when our respective positions with reference to Mr. Harrier were exactly reversed, found yourself imperatively bound to adopt a similar course. Grant me but one favour, the only one I shall ever ask at your hands. Seek not in any respect to alter my resolves; they have been deeply considered; they are immutable. Seek not to pry into the place of my retreat: let us have the fortitude to begin where we must finish, by accustoming ourselves to an absolute and total separation. Hereafter I may, perhaps, write to you, but, even upon this point, I am undetermined. As yet I have had no time to reflect, or to arrange my ulterior plans. It will be my study to do whatever may seem best for our mutual happiness and peace of mind.

“For both our sakes, I have torn myself away without the keen and unnecessary pang

of a parting interview. With my pen, therefore, my sweetest of sweet friends! my dear little Mimosa! my darling *Rose de Meaux*! (Oh! how delightful is it to call you once more by those endearing nick-names of our girlish days!) with my pen must I bid you adieu, and ejaculate Bless you, bless you, bless you a thousand times! That you may be quickly restored to health, and to the enjoyment of enduring felicity with the chosen of your affections, will be the constant prayer of your ever fond and affectionate, though ever separated friend,

“HELEN OWEN.”

Under the influence of highly-excited feelings, which, in writing to one who possessed her entire confidence, she dreamt not of qualifying in the expression, this letter had been dashed off without a pause or hesitation. That to Hunter, of which we subjoin a copy, though

speech was composed with greater difficulty, for she already experienced the reserve inspired by her totally altered situation. She was not now addressing her intended husband, but one whom she was henceforth to consider as a complete stranger.

MY DEAR FRIEND!

For now I will still call you, though any other and more tender appellation must forever be abandoned. let us congratulate one another on our providential escape, not only from the waters in which we were immersed, but from an insipid union which might have made irremediable misery upon ourselves and upon another whom we both love still better than ourselves. Ceaseless be our thanks to Heaven for this double res-

cue by your side yesterday, and heard every syllable of your impassioned address to

Rose, when you hung over her in the boat. That agonizing moment drew up the curtain of the past, and revealed to me all the stages of a mutual passion, my blindness to which seems to me at present little less than a miracle. The secret which had been so honourably locked up in your respective hearts, is divulged to each other, to me, to the world. You are fondly enamoured of Rose, she has bestowed her entire heart upon you.

“ You will be naturally distressed, perhaps terrified, at the thought of the pain and humiliation which this discovery must have occasioned me ; and I hasten, therefore, to relieve your apprehensions. Freely do I confess that for a moment my woman’s pride was shocked beyond endurance, my self-love unspeakably wounded, my heart tortured to its very core. For a brief space, I believe I was actually mad ; but the soul-convulsing spasm passed rapidly away, my vision was cleared in the struggle,

for putting a double  
tions by avoiding a  
seeking it with me.  
for this meditated sac  
you would have stri  
discharged the vows  
needless to add that  
you for all the pain  
tionally have occasi  
from every engagem  
how completely I  
in return, when I a  
can peruse this le  
London, never to r  
again !

“ But I do not rele

**Fondly** let her shattered health and deep **melancholy** attest. Your long-continued **unconscious** courtship has been eloquent in its **silence**, and, though passive, it has penetrated **deeply** into your hearts. What need, then, of **delay**?

“The poverty of Rose no longer presents a **barrier** to your union. She now possesses a **competency**, which, though moderate, will **enable** you to marry her without imprudence ; and it cannot, surely, be difficult to enlarge your income, when you give a proper direction to the great abilities with which you are **gifted**. May I be allowed to suggest that no **sphere** seems to me more appropriate to your **talents** and feelings, while none can be more **delightful** and independent, than the field of **literature**?

“Indulge me with a few more words about our dear Rose. You do not, you cannot, know her half so well as I do. This gifted creature

requires a delicacy of treatment, proportioned to the acuteness of her intellect and feelings. She has no parents, no relations; her oldest friend will be far, far away; she will have nobody in the wide world on whom to depend but yourself. You will possess all her thoughts, all her affections, her whole undivided heart, and oh, *what* a heart! Should you prove unworthy of this most precious charge, she will not long survive so withering a blight of all her hopes. Should you fondly reciprocate her love, oh how ineffable will be your mutual felicity!

“In calling upon God to bless your approaching union, I adjure you to recollect the alternative that is placed before you, and to pursue the right path. You *will* do so; I know, I feel that you will, for the sake of Rose, of yourself, and of her who, whithersoever she may be borne by the severing tides of fate, can never, never forget those whom

she never more shall see, nor ever cease to subscribe herself Mr. Hunter's

“ Sincere well-wisher and friend,

“ HELEN OWEN.”

Her letter to Hunter's sister was short, but not less honourable to her high and generous feelings than the foregoing. It ran as follows.

“ MY DEAR HARRIET,

“ Circumstances, which I need not detail, for you will quickly be apprized of them by others, have suddenly though amicably dissevered my marriage contract with your brother. We part to meet no more. But *your* nuptials, thank Heaven ! need not for a moment be interrupted. I am well aware that Mr. Holloway's friends only consented to the match in the belief that Alfred would soon be enabled to replace your portion. It had always been my intention to realize his wishes, and the enclosed receipt for stock transferred into your

**SECRET**

• Letter May you  
making sure as you close  
please do for a more  
pleasant at home and I  
also the organization.  
to our present mother:  
and home when I see  
the first new year.

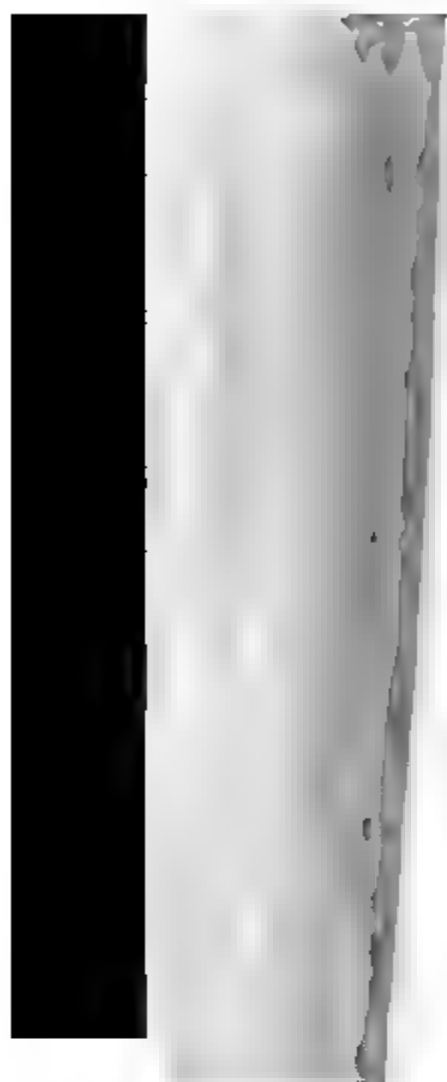
— ३३३ —

The only strategic need  
of these nations. She has  
found that there is  
nothing in the world.

While she had been devising her plans during the past sleepless night, while she had been carrying them into effect at the Bank, and subsequently writing to her friends, her mind had been kept in a state of tension, which gave her a temporary support. But, when this strong excitement failed, her overwrought spirit sank into exhaustion, she felt utterly unnerved and unstrung, and the tears again flowed from her eyes, without her possessing the power, or even the wish, to restrain them.

Recoiling from the idea of exposing her weakness to Mary, she contented herself with penning a few lines, containing a promise of full and unreserved explanations when she should have reached the end of her journey. A short letter, with a similar declaration, was also written to Mr. and Mrs. Bryant.

Soon after daylight on the following morning, Helen, accompanied by Horton, was posting



## CHAPTER V.

“ Oh ! 't is not, Hinda, in the power  
Of Fancy's most terrific touch  
To paint thy pangs in that dread hour —  
Thy silent agony — 't was such  
As those who feel can paint too well,  
But none e'er felt, and lived to tell !”

MOORE.

MS. LOMAX lived so perpetually in the  
presence of her beloved son, in whom all her  
daily hopes were concentrated, that his gra-  
dually declining health was less perceptible to  
herself than to others. Like Helen Owen, she  
was destined to experience that there is nothing  
so binding as our wishes ; she knew, she felt,  
that her whole happiness depended upon his  
very ; and the very thought of a disappoint-

ment was so withering to her heart, so utterly intolerable, that she drove it from her with loathing and abhorrence.

A doting mother is ever sanguine; and many circumstances combined to feed the expectations of Mrs. Lomax, which were never destined to be realized. The treacherous nature of her son's complaint, for he was now in the last stage of a rapid decline, was more especially calculated to delude her into the belief that he was rather recovering from his disease than sinking under it. The hectic flush, that insidious banner which death plants upon the cheek of his intended victim, to mark him for his own; the glary brilliancy of the eye, the expiring gleam of a sun that is about to set in the darkness of night; the preternatural acuteness of the intellect, a proof that the spirit is prematurely developing itself, until it has "o'er-informed its tenement of clay;" these symptoms of disease were to the fo-

parent incontestable evidences of convalescence.

A medical pretender, whose confident predictions of effecting a cure had induced her to employ him, and whose total ignorance of the complaint, or sordid determination to keep so profitable a patient in his hands, prompted him to maintain his bold assertions, helped to confirm her in her delusion.

But that which most effectually lulled her apprehensions was the demeanour of Benjamin himself, who, although his weakness increased, was totally free from suffering of any sort, while his spirits were never depressed. In this latter circumstance, however, the filial affection of the youth had contributed to deceive her. Without imagining himself to be in any imminent danger, a secret presentiment, and those undefinable sensations which can only be felt, not described, awoke occasional misgiving as to his ultimate recovery. Of death he had

at her whatever: but, the thought of leaving his parents and his sister so far overcame his gentle and loving heart, that, when left alone, which was but for brief intervals, he would sometimes sink into despondency, and shed involuntary tears.

Conscious, however, that his mother's happiness, if not her existence, was wrapped up in his own, he would not for the world have suffered her to witness his dejection. Whenever his quick ear caught the sound of her approach, he hastily washed his eyes, received her with his wonted smile, sweet as that of an angel, and, in order to gladden her soul with allusions to his recovery, talked cheerfully of different excursions which he had projected when his amended health should allow him to travel.

Wishing, upon one occasion, to confirm the impression of his returning strength, by walking for some time up and down the room, his

debilitated frame sank under the effort, and he fell into a fainting fit of such long continuance, that his agonized mother, imagining him to be dead, sat by his side in a stupor of transfixed horror, which was succeeded by a delirium of joy, when animation returned, and he once more opened his pearly, dove-like eyes.

As distrustful now as she had previously been sanguine, she sent instantly for the most eminent practitioner in London, who, after having minutely examined all the symptoms of his patient, and conversed with him for some time, took Mrs. Lomax aside, and, feelingly deploring the painful duty he was called upon to discharge, gradually broke to her the intelligence that her son was in a rapid consumption, which might allow him to live for some weeks, but from which he saw no chance whatever of ultimate recovery.

“What!” exclaimed the horror-stricken parent, clasping her hands together, and

“ While there is life, I  
hope : but, in this instan-  
taneously slight, that I must  
be prepared for a fatal

“ Never — never ! I  
prepared for my dear brother  
Mrs. Lomax : and, throwing  
knees, while she raised  
she passionately exclaimed  
for God’s sake, save him !  
shall have half our fortune  
I will give you every thing  
only do not — for pity’s sake  
my Benjamin, my only son  
upon earth — must die !”

to God, that he may assist my efforts, which shall be unremitting. Never have I seen a youth who appeared to me so perfectly seraphic, both in beauty and disposition; never have I seen a patient who in one single interview has awakened so powerful an interest in my heart. I will attend him as if he were my own child; you must second my skill and exertions by becoming his nurse; and, in order that you may effectually discharge the duties of that office, allow me to tell you that you must begin by moderating, nay, by totally suppressing, these transports of unavailing grief."

"I am calm—composed—serene," cried the mother, crushing down her violent grief by a sort of convulsive effort:—"I will be his slave by night and by day. Neither sleep nor refreshment shall I need while I am thus watching over him. Only give me instructions, and see how submissive, how abject, I will become!

What am I to do? How am I to act? Tell me, only tell me."

"Let me entreat you once more to govern your impatience. Your dear boy, *our* dear boy, as I may most truly term him, must not be hurried or agitated. still less must he be distressed by witnessing the grief of a parent with whose impassioned affection he cannot fail to sympathize. You must carefully conceal your anxiety; this is my first and most earnest injunction. Such other directions as may appear expedient, I will write down for your guidance."

From this hour, Mrs. Lomax became the nurse, companion, and comforter of the invalid, whose room she hardly ever quitted, administering all his medicines with her own hand, supplying every want, and anticipating every wish, with the tenderness, solicitude, and forethought, which none but a fond mother can feel and exercise.

And thus passed several weeks, during which there was an incessant though secret contest of love between the parent and the son, the latter fearing to make any allusion to his death, which he now felt to be surely approaching, from fear of distressing his mother, and ever wearing an affectionate smile in her presence, while his heart was sinking within him at the thought of their coming separation, and of the dark despair into which his decease might plunge her. She, on the other hand, though she marked with an indescribable anguish a daily change, which too visibly confirmed the prognostications of the physician, quelled the throbbing agony that almost threatened to burst her bosom, and subdued her features to a composure, which she could sometimes even wrench into a smile.

During this anxious interval, the day arrived which had been fixed for the triple nuptials. Those of Helen and Hunter were never to be



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fended.  
with her

her engagement, in point of time, that he instantly assented to the deferment of his happiness, until the fate of Benjamin should have been decided.

None of these imperative grounds for delay applied to the union of Harriet and Holloway, the latter of whom, having obtained a temporary leave of absence from business, for his wedding excursion, had travelled up to London to claim his bride. That marriage was, therefore, solemnized on the appointed day. Neither the circumstances nor the wishes of the parties calling for any parade on the occasion, we have little to record, save that the bustling and kind-hearted Mrs. Hunter, disappointed as she was that her son's intended union with Helen had been so unexpectedly marred, seemed at the wedding of Harriet to be half crazy with joy; while her grief and her tears were equally uncontrollable, when she was obliged to bid her daughter adieu.

An invitation, however, to visit the newly married couple, on their return home, and the anticipation of being thus enabled to run over to Monkwell, and explore the scenes of her past happiness, so rapidly restored her equanimity, that she exclaimed with a simpering complacency, as the post-chaise bore them from her door:—"Joy go with you? joy go with you! What a nice chaise, and what capital horses! Well, I do think they are the prettiest pair I ever saw—that is, Harriet and Holloway. La! there's one of them kicking! That's right, postboy, flog them well: I hope they're vicious; but do n't hurt them, poor creatures—the horses, I mean. God bless them, and grant that they may be comforts and companions to me in my old age, and sit by my bedside and close my eyes when I die. La! only think of my seeing dear Monkwell again! the grave where my poor husband lies buried. Ah! I shall never, never forget the throb of

my heart gave, when they first began to toll the bell at his funeral. Why, there's the muffin-man's bell, I do declare, and not yet six o'clock! Where's Sally? We ought to make merry on dear Harriet's wedding-day, and so we'll have some muffins for tea."

Without any material alteration in the symptoms, Benjamin continued to sink under a painless and gradual declension. The invalid himself was the first to make allusion to a subject which had long engrossed the attention of all, but which all had feared to broach. Conscious that his death was now rapidly approaching, and, dreading the effect it might produce upon his friends, and more especially upon his mother, should she be unprepared for the blow, he determined to communicate to her the certainty of the coming event, and, if possible, to reconcile her to it by anticipation.

Taking, therefore, and tenderly pressing the hand of either parent in his own, as they sate

and dulcet than ever:  
Mary! The fear of dis-  
duced me to lock up a  
which ought, perhaps, to  
vealed. The time is con-  
longer silent, lest my I  
for ever; and, if I give  
only that you may be the  
after. Bear my tidings  
as I impart them, and do  
plore you, do not lacera  
display of an unavailing  
that I must shortly die I  
the hand of death upon  
no love, no skill, can save  
are numbered. Soon, I  
we must part for ever;  
and all that my beloved

be as perfectly resigned to this painful severance as —— as I am.”

His voice, which had been previously firm, though soft and low, trembled a little at these last words, and he paused as if to recover and collect himself. Long as they must have been prepared for the event thus announced, the countenances of his auditors betrayed a mixture of surprise and embarrassment, with the deepest mental anguish ; but his emphatic adjuration prevented any ebullition, and they compelled themselves to silence.

Mary, though not less deeply affected than her parents, retained much more command over her feelings, quelling, as well as she could, every manifestation that might distress her brother. At first, she was afraid to trust her voice, but, having in some degree recovered her firmness, she returned the beaming smile of the invalid, and exclaimed, with an assumed calmness : “Dearest Benjamin ! let us hope that you may be

Let us hope that our  
undoubted and  
physician, may st  
to us all."

Benjamin shook h  
smile.

"Well, then," resur  
still a hope, still a hea  
Our separation, ho  
a short one. We  
no more—we shall mee  
ness and sorrow are un

"Ay, ay," joyfully e  
saying his celestial  
countenance became i  
fervour. "That, indee  
we shall meet in heav

Mrs. Lamer

exchanged a rapid but significant and agonising look with her husband. Abashed, heart-stricken, appalled, the guilty pair instantly read each other's thoughts. *They* had no chance of heaven ; outcasts and reprobates, they were cut off, by their unrepented and unatoned crime, from all the promises of divine favour ; instead of sharing the hopes of their son, their souls were darkened with despair. When once he was withdrawn from their embraces, never, never should they again behold their darling Benjamin.

As these promptings of remorse rushed across the mind of Lomax, he groaned deeply, turned his wandering, haggard, eyes towards the door, and walked out of the room with a look of anguish and dismay. Mary immediately followed him, for she saw by his disturbed mood that he was not fit to be trusted alone ; while the partner of his guilt, as if apprehensive that her countenance might betray what

not prepared for this ; I would be more calm, in will of Heaven. Nay, I would not only have been faithful, for, oh ! with how much mercy, has this been accompanied ! In my body have I sustained a martyrdom, I am dying, it is true, but might it seem that I am distressed, serenely, pleasantly, in my glorious sphere of existence, I am elated by a new power of spirit, as if my wings were about me, and I were about to fly, without one backward thought, without one earth-clinging

— 1830 —

“ May God forgive me if I am wrong,” said the afflicted mother, resuming some degree of composure ; “ but methinks there is an aggravation mingled with the very solace to which you have made allusion. Suffering, and sorrow, the waning frame and the ravages of age, reconcile us to a separation even from the dearest objects of our love, by converting the dart of death into a welcome instrument of release. But, to lose you thus, dear Benjamin, in all the bloom of youth and beauty, to have you snatched away just as you are rising up into a manhood which would have been the comfort, the honour, the glory, of our old age—this, this indeed is hard to bear ! It is as if my heart were to be suddenly torn up by the roots, and wrenched from out my bosom.”

“ And yet who shall say, dear mother, that this decree of Providence may not be a blessing ? I know that we are all fallible creatures, liable to temptation ; and, had I lived, I might,

perhaps, by falling into some deadly sin, have been a disgrace and a curse to you in your old age, instead of a comfort and an honour."

"Never, dear Benjamin, never ! It is not in your nature. You would only have lived to shed a richer glory and happiness over our house. But this delight, this earthly redemption to our souls, is to be denied us. Besotted that we were to expect it ! Had we but looked at you, but listened to you, we ought not to have dreamed of any such beatitude. No ; you are too good, too beautiful, to remain long among us. In form, face, mind, every thing, you are a ready-made seraph, and Heaven is but reclaiming its own. With such a glorious destiny before you, well may you rejoice to quit this melancholy world."

"I do *not* rejoice to quit it, dear mother, although I am perfectly resigned to my fate ; nor can I by any means deem this cheerful and

beautiful earth a melancholy world. What a beneficent miracle is it to be called out of the blank darkness of nothing, to be formed in God's own image ; to be placed in this sun-lighted and sky-roofed palace, to be endowed with faculties and perceptions that qualify us for the enjoyment of the most exquisite delights, both sensual and intellectual ; and, above all, to inherit the hopes of future immortality in a higher and more glorious state of being ! Oh ! what sublime, what soul-exalting privileges are these ! Who, then, shall call this a melancholy world ? ”

“ They who have dashed from the hand of the Deity his proffered cup of happiness and salvation ! ” groaned Mrs. Lomax, in a voice of solemn anguish. “ The guilty, though undetected, wretches, who have secretly violated the laws of God and man ; the weak and wicked creatures who, like Esau, have sold their birth-right for a mess of pottage. Oh horrible ! most horrible ! ”



and  
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said  
the c  
shall  
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around  
you ag  
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Comp  
rein in h  
her head  
for she h  
minded h  
speak.  
Rapt, enter  
the

mingling with her attention, as if she were listening to the music of a newly-descended messenger from Heaven. Thus did she remain, until her youthful monitor, exhausted by the effort he had made, again kissed her, and, beseeching her to remember what he had said, begged she would leave him for the present, that he might refresh himself by sleep.

This injunction was obeyed ; but, when his unhappy mother no longer felt the magic influence of his voice, the storm of sorrow, which it had lulled not quelled, again began to agitate her bosom. Nay, the very display of affection and talent which, for the moment, had consoled her, served now to aggravate her grief, for she could not bear the thought that so gifted a creature, the rose, as it were, of the whole world, should be thus prematurely cut off in the bud. For some time past, she had never dared to pray, for without penitence and atonement, she felt that to implore a blessing on her

struggle for freedom, I  
in the end, I have meted a  
generously implied that  
be taken instead of her be-

It is as in every thin  
the impulse of violent and  
The thought that her pet  
be granted soothed in a  
quish: and when the nig  
she at length sank to sleep  
dreaming her prayer.

## CHAPTER VI.

" Here comes the sad denouncer of my fate,  
To toll the mournful knell of separation "

DRYDEN

INSTIGATED by a misdirected zeal, Mrs. Skinner now regularly besieged Cypress House, intruding herself unceremoniously and at the most unseasonable hours, in the hope of being enabled to pour her "leprous distilment" into the ear of the dying Benjamin. But his vigilant mother, too acute to be deceived, too resolute to be intimidated, and entertaining, moreover, no very high opinion of her visitor's discretion, when her fiery fervour was once kindled, plended the physician's injunctions that his patient should

the perilous sin of leaving  
without spiritual consolation  
that he might have a  
Grimsby, a friend of the  
Gospel, and a person of  
strenuous eloquence, than  
his doctrine and the hope  
as was Mrs. Skinner to  
were beyond the pale of  
she was not less prone  
were within it; either for  
as it may be more charac-  
teristic of his real charac-  
ter much more favourably  
deserved.

Bankrupt in character  
Grimsby had travelled

so easily get into any society as by passing through the door of the tabernacle, he joined a brotherhood of ultra-Calvinists. Assuming a most sanctimonious demeanour, and being gifted with a natural and ready eloquence, he presently began to expound to a few select hearers, and, enlarging his views with the number of his auditors, eventually set up for a Gospel minister, and found little difficulty in being enrolled as an itinerant preacher. In this new vocation, which was at first rendered successful by the severity of his doctrine and the fluency of his tongue, it became more than ever necessary to be circumspect and decorous in his way of life; although, as it will be seen in the sequel, he was in reality not less unprincipled than ever.

Let it not be imagined, even for an instant, that we offer this hypocrite as a sample of the sect to which he belonged, and which we have not the remotest intention to disparage. Sincerity and virtue, however widely we may

toleration, that we were  
most intolerant ; nor ca  
be injured, by stating t  
clothing sometimes deceiv  
appointed watchmen, and

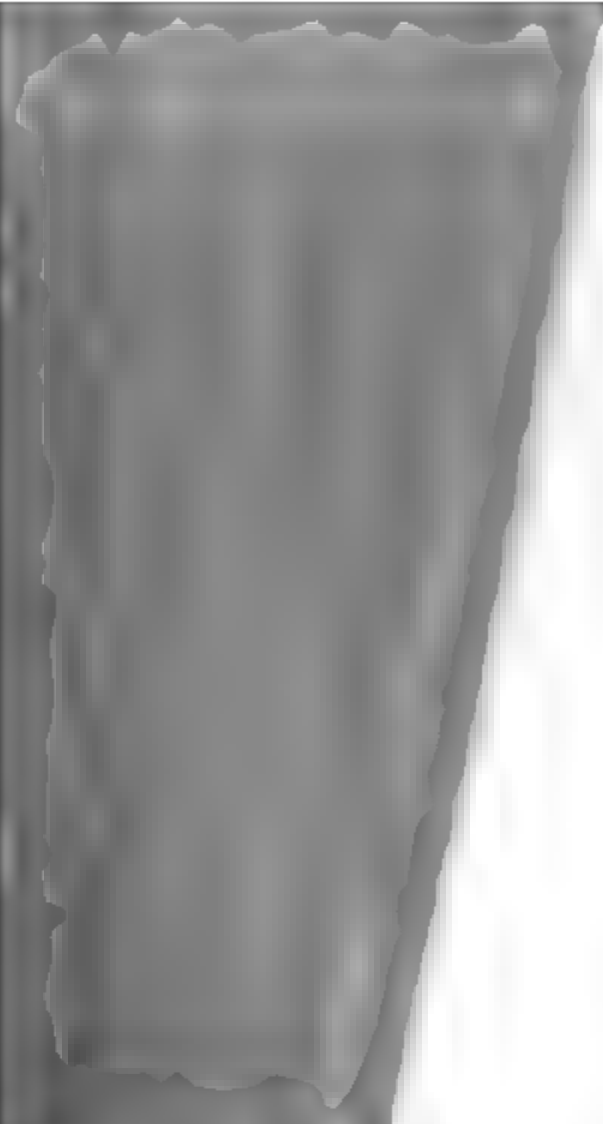
Notwithstanding Mrs. S  
mendations, Mrs. Lomax v  
by to see her sick son unti  
physician, who was so ar  
in his attendance, that he  
rather as the affectionat  
medical adviser of the fam

“ Grimshy ! ” he exclaim  
and shaking his head, “  
man before, and have seen  
produced upon one of my  
denunciations, that I will

what need has our dear Benjamin, what need has this youthful saint of any ghostly comforter, (a title, by the bye, which is totally inapplicable to Mr. Grimsby) when we all know by our own daily experience that he so little requires religious solace in his own person, as to be able to impart it, most sweetly and beneficially, to others. Why should we presumptuously attempt to teach our teacher? Conversant as I am with such scenes, never, never have I seen the beauty of holiness so touchingly, so convincingly, exemplified."

"I always said he was an angel," sighed the mother; "but Mrs. Skinner has doubts of his acceptance, because he has experienced no ecstasies, seen no visions of coming glory, tasted no antepast of the promised beatitudes."

"So much the better; I distrust these spurious raptures, knowing that they are often succeeded by despair and mental horrors that border upon phrensy. In our dear Benjamin we behold no



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announcement of his name, he intruded himself.

The countenances of its occupants, when he had briefly and without apology proclaimed his errand, presented a variety sufficiently marked to deserve a passing notice. Grimsby was a middle-aged man of a sallow, sodden complexion, a stern, forbidding, callous aspect, "a villanous low forehead," and a shock of bristly black hair, thatching a large mis-shapen head. Opposite to him, gracefully reclined the young, the fair, the golden-locked Benjamin, his azure eyes benignantly beaming as he gazed with a smile of welcome on the stranger. Very different was the expression of his mother, her fine features, always characteristic of energy and decision, being now knit and darkened into a most significant frown of suppressed indignation. Her husband, whose face had become blotched and bloated by habitual intemperance, had only partly recovered from the first alarm occasioned

room, or watched the do-  
sion of some lurking to  
the bed sate Mary, pal-  
tionate regards now fixed  
and now turned appeal-  
ing to deprecate any pro-  
turb the bland serenity of

Not perceiving, or not  
treating, Grimsby immedi-  
ately the youth as to his having  
supernatural and ecstatic  
favour and acceptance  
termed an experience.  
He had not received any  
manifestation ; though he  
reliance on the mercy  
perfectly at ease in his n-

him into hopeless perdition and everlasting torment!

“I am but an inexperienced youth, and it becomes me not to argue with you, even if I were able,” meekly replied Benjamin, the liquid suavity of whose voice, after the loud dissonance of his catechist, fell like softest music on the ear. “From this blessed book,” he continued, laying his hand upon the Bible, “it were not difficult, I think, to show that you are in error, might I, without presumption, enter into theological controversy with a minister of the Gospel. But there is another comforter in the room, whose whisperings, audible to me, though not, perhaps, to you, I may in all humility venture to repeat. Mary, give me yonder flower-pot from the table. Look, Mr. Grimsby, at this rose; it has expanded and blown before my eyes, this very morning, while I have been watching and meditating upon the miracle of its birth. It fills me with reverence, I had almost said with awe, for

to me it seems  
 Creator's hand  
 earth. I can  
 notly-lyghte  
 Its breath so  
 gently move  
 things I hear  
 how the w  
 adorned and  
 all exquisite  
 colour and  
 touch hath it  
 their odours  
 the night on  
 the casually  
 without a cl  
 what purpos  
 levelly by the  
 delectation o  
 Thinkest tho  
 the same Fat

thus so careful to lavish upon them even superfluous graces and enjoyments, during their evanescent existence in this world, can find delight in condemning them to torture and despair in that which is to last for ever? When thou hearest a mistaken fellow-creature thus attempting to dethrone the all-loving, all-bountiful, all-merciful Creator, and to set up a demon in his place, point to the flowers, point to a rose, and say, Even were there no Bible, this should be my refutation of your doctrine, this my hope and trust, this my assurance of goodness and of mercy, this my defence of the calumniated Deity ! ' ' "

With looks of the utmost horror, the exasperated fanatic began to pour forth a fresh torrent of denunciation against all who could entertain such pernicious notions, when Mrs. Lomax, leading or rather dragging him out of the room, exclaimed, as she shut the door behind her, " Go, sir, leave my house, and return

the dove, or the tiger  
again to visit my angel :

“ I forgive your rude  
your infatuation,” said  
he had allowed his irrit  
him too far, and ended  
indignation he had exc  
charging a solemn but  
execution of which I ne  
ceremonies of life to i  
that neither you nor you  
a soul-involving delusio  
you may not have loved  
for his own eternal h  
Much, much do I fear  
the Giver in the gift, th  
and have thus converte

wards heavenly comforts, by leaving you without a single solace upon earth. Should this prediction be verified, I will visit you in your trouble, assist you with my counsel, and endeavour to guide you Zionward. In the mean time, peace be with you."

These words, spoken in an oracular tone, and rendered significant by the secret presentiments of her own heart, made more impression upon Mrs. Lomax than she chose to confess, even to herself. At a subsequent period they frequently recurred to her, and led to results of the most distressing and fatal nature.

"I hope you have dismissed our visitor gently and with due acknowledgments," said her son, when she returned to his apartment. "His intentions are doubtless good, and I am most thankful for his kindness, though I cannot coincide in his views. Good motives may well reconcile us to an erroneous opinion, if such, indeed, it be, for which of us, fallible and

without producing its  
appearance of sympathy  
as soon as it felt  
slightly inconvenient  
instead of being over-  
end, his intellect be-  
came, and his mood  
was earthly about his  
spiritualising, in a  
change. As the  
describes the land ere  
rises, and announce  
as the young lark,  
covers the vet until  
the tidings to the  
gladness: so did the  
favoured youth catch

countenance, so illuminated his mind, so cheered and exalted his heart, that they who gazed upon his surpassing beauty, and heard the holy effusions that fell in music from his lips, felt their love and admiration solemnized by a thrilling awe, as if they stood in the presence of a superior nature, and were listening to a revelation from the world of spirits.

It was evening, and, as Benjamin reclined upon his bed surrounded by his family, and soothing their sorrows into reverence and resignation by such discourse as we have been describing, he desired that the window might be thrown open, for the weather was sultry, and he thought the air might relieve him. The beams of the setting sun, reflected by a crimson cloud, threw a flush of light into the room, that imparted a glow of seeming health to the sick youth, who drew himself a little higher up on the pillow, and gazed out, through his favourite flowers in the window, upon the animated river, and the

apartment, filling it with roses over which it poured boughs and the song of the garden; and a musical instrument had been purchased by Mrs. M., for the amusement of the invalid, filled with tinklings, with Luther's hymns, which he found particular associations with which it

"How pleasant, how beautiful," he exclaimed, when the music came, "to behold the setting sun, and the variegated earth, and to catch the busy hum so near as to disturb the tinct enough to awaken all of the heart! Mine is e

..

as if it were yearning, more ardently than ever, for that glorious heaven which is looking so benignantly down upon me. I feel that my days, my hours, are rapidly drawing to a close, and oh ! how thankful should I be if I might pass away now, even now, cheered by the light, and fanned by the airs of heaven, surrounded with sweet odours, and music, and beauty, and closing my eyes amid the love-beaming looks of all those who are dear to me upon earth, in the blessed hope of again meeting them in heaven."

He paused, but his rapt companions made no reply, for they derived a mournful solace from his discourse, and invited him by their silence to resume it. He did so, after a while, exclaiming, in a weaker voice, " I am very, very happy ; I am wonderfully sustained, as if by an invisible hand drawing me heavenward. Ah ! if my wish could at this instant be realised, how truly might I exclaim, ' O death ! where

[illegible]

mother gently closed the window, hushingly whispered her husband and Mary to withdraw, and seated herself at the foot of the bed, brooding over him with a solicitude so fond that she feared to move, and almost to breathe, lest she should awaken him. The setting sun, chequered by the flowers in the window, fell upon his waxen features, and flickered amid his golden locks, until, as she gazed intently upon him, she fancied his head to be surrounded by a divine halo, and mentally ejaculated, "Assuredly this is no son of mine, no mortal youth, but a seraph whom Heaven has vouchsafed to send down awhile upon the earth, and now, alas ! is preparing to reclaim. Instead of repining, should this unmerited boon be withdrawn from me, I should rather be grateful that I have been suffered to enjoy it so long. And yet to part—to part for ever ! I cannot, cannot reconcile my mind to a thought so withering, so agonising."

[illegible]

After we had her  
sewing machine and a  
staircase, I thought, how  
wonderful that of her  
first experience which  
was the night that she

slumber. To prevent his being disturbed by the entrance of servants, she had given orders that candles should always be left on a slab outside, so as to be ready when wanted. Cautiously opening the door, and stealing out on tiptoe, she brought them in, and deposited them at the further end of the room, casting a look at the supposed sleeper, as she returned to her seat. His attitude remained precisely the same, but his eyes were not quite closed, and there was an indescribable something in his aspect which suddenly electrified her with a suspicion of the dreadful truth.

Starting to his side, she thrice ejaculated his name, beginning with a hoarse whisper, and rising into an impatient cry. All was motionless, all was silent ! Agonised by this confirmation of her fears, she snatched up his outstretched hand. It was cold as marble ; and, as she flung it from her, with an irrepressible shudder, it fell rattling upon the little table by

And as she thought of  
the future of her child  
she remembered the words  
of the doctor—  
“He is dead.”  
and as she remembered  
a stroke of lightning  
bereft mother. “He is  
through the whole hour

“He is dead,” she  
she reiterated, with a  
despair. “O God! w!  
my heart! It is broke  
and my brain, my bra  
denly clasping her he  
throbs, it whirls, it i  
mad!”

For a brief space, she  
bitterly brooding over

every instant appeared to her distempered mind more cruel, more outrageous, more intolerable. Although her son had been given over by the physicians, and had himself repeatedly announced to her his approaching death, she had so clung to the belief of his recovery, so hoped in the midst of hopelessness, that she was quite unprepared for the blow when at length it fell upon her.

The natural violence of her disposition, restrained and pent up during her long attendance in the sick chamber, now burst forth with an accumulated and ungovernable fury. She gnashed her teeth, and, glaring wildly around the room, with the look of an enraged lioness whose young one has been shot by the hunter, exclaimed, in accents of almost frantic desperation, "So, then ! I am standing in the presence of the grisly tyrant, of the grim destroyer—Death ! He is here in this very room, triumphing over his victim, preparing to feast upon his

... I have my enemy,  
dare he I stand, come for  
let me clutch thee: I  
challenge thee to the  
unarmed, a woman;  
mother, and I feel stro  
into ten thousands pieces  
heart ! ”

Overcome by this ravin  
ed woman sank uncon  
whence, however, she  
exclaimed, “ Benjamin c  
him—I too will die—we  
world shall die.” Th  
upon the floor, she con  
tone, “ Oh that I could c  
atoms with my heel, and  
and consign the whole  
and night ! ”

The vehemence of her gesticulations, the loudness of her voice, and the terrible distortion of her inflamed features, presented, at this moment, an appalling contrast to the fixed immobility, the placid pale face, and the never-to-be-broken silence of the deceased youth, over whose unchanged beauty death had not yet exercised the smallest dominion.

Lomax, who had caught the sound of her passionate exclamations, now entered the room, and seemed to produce a change in her feelings, for she pointed to the dead body with an apparent calmness, and said, in a hoarse, composed voice, "All is over — Benjamin is dead!"

"Poor fellow! poor fellow!" exclaimed the father, who had been quite prepared for the catastrophe. "God's will be done! he died without pain or sorrow, and we have discharged our duty as parents up to the last. This will always be a consolation to us."

212 — "And with the  
expression of contempt  
none—none—none."

Alarmed by the fix-  
ed iron to her features  
her from the sight of  
scarcely knew how to  
in a soothing voice. "  
not deny that this dis-  
turbly tempered with i  
patiently to the decre  
us quit this chamber o  
supper-time."

"You are right, you  
starting from her pro-  
altered air, "let us qu  
ing apartment. Let  
be coming on this hi-

raph son. Pah! it is an abomination to my sight—a heap of carrion and corruption. Away! away!”

As she spoke thus, her eyes and countenance flared with a wild animation, she ran to her husband, seized his arm, and hurried him down stairs, rapidly exclaiming—“Did you not say it was supper-time? Ha! ha! ha! Well! why not? Let us carouse and sing, and drive away thought; for thought will madden us. It was no fool who said, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.’ To-morrow? There will be no to-morrow for Benjamin; he died to-day, and we will forget him before the night is out. Ay, and forget ourselves, too, which is better still. Ha, ha, ha!”

Having by this time entered the dining-room, where the table was laid for supper, always an important meal with the luxurious Lomax, she filled a tumbler with wine, emptied it at a draught, and continued, with a look and voice



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses, which are listed in a columnar format. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are written in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with the names in the left column and the addresses in the right column. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are written in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with the names in the left column and the addresses in the right column.

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and addresses, which are listed in a columnar format. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are written in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with the names in the left column and the addresses in the right column. The names are written in a cursive script, and the addresses are written in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with the names in the left column and the addresses in the right column.

Nature could hold out no longer. To the unspeakable relief of the husband, who was half dead with terror, his distracted wife released her grasp and fell upon the floor, writhing, shrieking, and laughing in the most appalling hysterics.



**Thi  
and th  
Hunter,  
letter, a  
and her  
separated**

if she had received the tidings of her friend's sudden death, superseded for the moment every other feeling in the bosom of the sensitive Rose, who, when she recollected what she owed to her for all her past favours, for the noble munificence communicated in her present letter, and the sacrifices of all sorts involved in her perpetual self-banishment from London, sunk under a weight of obligation that almost crushed her heart. Upbraiding herself with the blackest ingratitude towards her benefactress, she gave way to an agony of remorse, which, in conjunction with the illness produced by her immersion in the river, confined her for several days to her bed, and threatened for the moment to disturb her senses.

Gradually, however, her mental vision became less distorted, and she was relieved from much of her suffering and agitation by being enabled to view recent occurrences in their true light. Why should she thus bitterly accuse

and unexpected result. Imprudent she might be in placing her affections upon him, but she kept up the secret in her inviolate, until it had a combination of circumstances which she had no control; besides, she did it if not gladly, at least with the same sacrifice of love and friendship, in which she had been aided by the generous Helen.

These considerations, however, did not relieve her immediate distress, but she was more consolable for the loss of her friend, and was able to overcome by the means which she had while the painful awkwardness in which she was placed. Hunter filled her with the idea of which the dawning of

arise from recent occurrences, had not yet begun to penetrate.

Nor were Hunter's feelings, in the first instance, much more enviable than those of his mistress, for such is the term that we must now apply to Rose. He, too, accused himself of the most unfeeling demeanour towards Helen at the time of the accident, although his offence was involuntary; he too was stung with a sense of ingratitude, especially when he adverted to the contents of her letter; and he began to think that he had never fully appreciated the character of this magnanimous girl, until he had lost her for ever. But these upbraidings of a delicate and honourable mind were soon mitigated by considerations of a more soothing nature. Much as he admired and respected Helen, grateful as he was for the affections she had bestowed upon him, and the frank liberality she had evinced in all the preliminary arrangements of their intended marriage, he could not

of securing happiness to himself.

Now, too, did he discern for the first time the full extent of the passion for Rose Mayhew, fanned by the breath of which had been so long in his bosom kindled into a flame more ardently when it found itself so closely confined. He had been so closely confined, and so completely independent, such a prospect to anticipate, even in the future, floated before his eyes, and over the sweet assurance of his affection for her fringed. Of this, indeed, he cherished a suspicion, and above all her

on her revival in the boat, unconscious as she might be of her deportment on that occasion, placed beyond the reach of doubt.

From the difficulties and delicate scruples, which might still have separated those whom nature and accident had combined to bring together, they were liberated by the prompt intervention of Mrs. Hunter. That good lady's olio of exclamations, when she learnt the flight of Helen and its cause, as well as her surpassing generosity to Harriet Rose, was of too mosaic a character to admit of transcription.

“Only to think!” she repeatedly ejaculated, “only to think of Alfred not caring, after all, for Helen, rich as she was, and falling in love with that strange, wild-looking, odd girl, without a penny, who always seemed to me more like a little sprite than real flesh and blood. To be sure she won't look so, I dare say, now that she has got a fortune of her own. Well, I always liked her myself, ever since she gave

an excellent wife — only scratch, and is a terrible any cold fish in the cupboard of poor Madge. We shall to Monkwell, after all, this affair, and I can think of no Dear! dear! what has been holder? It has been missed day."

By the aid of this active negotiator, a meeting of the lovers, as soon as I recovered from her indisposition of both parties previous exchange of the received from Helen. In told them that their courts

other. Notwithstanding this preparation for their first interview, Rose was so completely overcome that she trembled like an aspen leaf, and, shaking down her tresses over her burning cheeks, sunk into the arms of her lover, unable to articulate a word.

“O, Mr. Hunter !” she at length murmured, gently disengaging herself, as he pressed her to his bosom ; “our dear Helen has truly told you that I have no parents, no relations, and now—now that my oldest, my best——forgive me this gush of tears ; indeed, indeed, I cannot help it—now that Helen is torn away from me, I shall have no friend in the wide world but yourself. After what has passed, it were vain trifling to deny the state of my affections. I give up my whole heart to you ; I will devote myself to your happiness, and, if you have any sorrows, I will share them with you. But oh ! for my sake, for your own sake, for the sake of our dear, dear Helen, remember her solemn

To this affecting appeal reply, acknowledging their errors had afforded forgiveness, but pledged passionate fervour, to try his future conduct to his beloved Rose. A week less awkward than an increasing acquaintance enjoyed, in a delightful courtship season, which already passed the much of the year. One might regret in the bosom pressed by the magical power, which they felt themselves ought to

receive ; and, notwithstanding her peremptory injunctions to the contrary, they determined on requesting her to diminish the amount of her gift, as soon as they should have learnt the place of her retreat.

In the course of a few days the fugitive imparted this secret, under the most solemn injunctions of secrecy, to Mary Lomax, who kindly undertook to snatch a moment from the melancholy affairs of Cypress House, and to communicate their joint wishes to Helen. In a reply, couched in terms of the most inflexible decision, she refused to make the smallest alteration in her arrangements, adding that she desired the whole money to be settled, so as to secure it against the possibility of future improvidence ; and protesting that she would not put herself in correspondence with Rose until she received the intelligence of her marriage, which she wished to be celebrated, as she had before urged, without any further

During this interval, a portion of Helen's recollections have been employed in such a manner that he not only realised a considerable sum, but made a most advantageous supply of future works of literature. With this independence for him and Rose, he determined, against the wishes of his mother, to visit them, on returning finally intended. This he took themselves afterwards, for the present, was

Such and desolating had occurred in these two short years of the wretched

usual energy failed her the most deplorably when she had the greatest need of its assistance and support. Had she shared her husband's perpetual alarms about the return of Edward Ruddock to Europe, and the consequent detection and punishment of their crime, her bold spirit would have been braced up to a state of tension which might have rendered it less sensible to the present blow ; but so long a time had now elapsed without any tidings of this dreaded claimant, or any other occurrence to excite reasonable alarm on the subject, that she had sunk into a fancied security, which only assisted to unnerve her.

As the paper kite, sustained and kept elate by the very string that threatens to drag it down, falters and falls to the ground when its hold is broken, and its influence no longer felt, so did Mrs. Lomax, who had kept bravely up while the halter around her neck seemed to be incessantly drawing her towards the place of

Benjamin, the only re-  
mained her, as it were,  
telling her to it, was  
the even, and a hope  
darkened her void hea-  
dowering over the dese-  
ning of all reflections,  
great crime perpetrate  
as if it were the spectu-  
and she often muttere  
"I am very remorse —"  
"I am justly punished !"  
"that I violated the law  
to take that I gave ov-  
petition : and he is tak-  
ie is dead ' Nothing  
have I gained by my wil-

It was remarkable that after the death of Benjamin she never ventured to trust her lips with the utterance of his name, although she referred to him, either directly or indirectly, nearly as often as she spoke. Her own thoughts being entirely engrossed with one object, she did not suppose it possible that her hearers could imagine her to be alluding to any other. Her son had been the whole world to her while he was alive, and out of that world she could not wander, now that he was dead.

Many sufferers under a distressing bereavement seek to stimulate the memory, and, at the same time, to alleviate their sorrows, by wearing about their persons the miniature, the hair, or some other memento of the cherished object they have lost, as if they were not altogether separated while yet able to gaze upon these present memorials of the departed. The grief of Mrs. Lomax was so intense and



hue of marble, and her countenance expression of fixed and calm death, so much more appalling to behold than violent paroxysms of passion.

Loss of sensibility, the more striking by its contrast to the usual vehement temperament, was dispelled by a revivification in itself, but not unimpaired consequences. In removing the things that had belonged to the deceased, the servants found a sealed letter addressed to his mistress, to whom he immediately delivered it. As she recognised the handwriting of her son, a cry of surprise escaped from her lips, her heart throbbed, and her trembling hands hardly dared to break open the paper, of which she was the contents :

Dearest Mother !

In the place in which I have purchased this letter, you will not, in all

broken recollection, her h  
tain any additional excitem  
and it was her first order, t  
thing should be carefully  
sight which might awake  
niscences, or interfere wi  
which *he* already formed th  
wished her eyes and ears to  
order that she might brood  
of him in the silence of he  
a fonder and more entire at

For the first fortnight a  
was completely stunned l  
dering about the house in  
and scarcely conscious of  
issuing the orders to whic  
Hitherto she had not shed

as well as the hue of marble, and her countenance wore that expression of fixed and calm despair, which is so much more appalling to behold than the most violent paroxysms of passion.

This suspension of sensibility, the more noticeable from its contrast to the usual vehemence of her temperament, was dispelled by an incident, trivial in itself, but not unimportant in its consequences. In removing some books that had belonged to the deceased, one of the servants found a sealed letter addressed to his mistress, to whom he immediately delivered it. As she recognised the well-known writing of her son, a cry of surprise burst from her lips, her heart throbbed violently, and her trembling hands hardly enabled her to break open the paper, of which the following were the contents :

“ Dearest, dearest Mother !

“ From the place in which I have purposely deposited this letter, you will not, in all

This reflection impart  
feelings as I am writin  
communicate to you as  
so I may make the d  
your mind. Come to n  
sepulchre ! Carry your  
vault wherein I am plac  
son in his winding-sh  
how the eyes on which  
closed for ever : how th  
fondly pressed, are liv  
voice which, as you havi  
to your ears as if you h  
is hushed, and can neve  
all your love ! I wish y  
beside my corpse, in ord  
have the awfulness of s

your memory from a mass of clay and corruption; in order that you may detach yourself from the earth, and think only how to secure our future and inseparable union in the realms of bliss.

“ Mother! be comforted for my loss. This will be my last prayer on earth, my first aspiration from the world of spirits. Nowhere, nowhere can this comfort be found except in religion. You will have seen how its divine assurances supported me, even in my separation from the best, the fondest, the most indulgent of parents.

“ Mother! I have addressed my letter to you, because I foresee that your grief will be the most acute, your heart the most inconsolable; but I wish this posthumous warning and entreaty to be communicated to my dear father, and my ever affectionate Mary, with my renewed thanks for all their tenderness and love, my renewed entreaties for forgiveness

As she perused this electrified mother started in stupor of her grief, her sudden revulsion, the heart was smitten, as if forth the grave, and the from her eyes in a passion were the first tears she had of her son, and they afforded relief, that she almost away, although they baffled as she strove to repress was fain, therefore, to press both hands, as she indited the blessed boy ! my angelic thee ! — I will obey thee

In losing Benjamin, she had lost all consolation, all joy, all hope. The splendour with which she was surrounded became hateful in her sight, as an accusing evidence of her guilt ; she found no relief in opulence, no pleasure in society, no charm in existence. Earth was now a hell to her ; and, if she ventured to turn her thoughts heavenward, she felt herself repelled from the very threshold, and driven back to wander and to mourn, as a hopeless outcast, in a cheerless and detested world.

“Oh ! that he had been taken from me,” would she sometimes ejaculate, in the bitterness of her self-upbraidings, “before I had forfeited my hopes of mercy by this mad and useless crime ; for then, then could I have endured life and have welcomed death in the soul-entrancing prospect of rejoining him. Accursed wretch that I am ! what avails it that he is at this moment kneeling for me at the throne of grace ? His intercessions cannot be heard, for

acquired by him. His  
and silvery voice calling :  
cannot answer, for I am :  
Look, look, he is leaning :  
golden ringlets fall forwa  
his arms, and invites me  
lestial smile of love, but  
him, for Satan has fast b  
dragging me downward  
rrible ! ”

At this moment, she :  
with a momentary delir  
chancing to enter the ro  
him, and grasping him by  
hands, screamed out as  
him :

“ Villain ! villain ! it wa  
your forgery of the will. It

and cutting us off from all chance of joining our blessed boy hereafter ! ”

“ Jane ! dear Jane ! ” croaked the terrified and half-throttled husband, “ for Heaven’s sake, speak not so loud, you will be overheard. How am I to blame ? Who was it that first suggested the crime to me ? who combated and ridiculed all my objections ? who urged, nay, drove, me forward with threats, when I would have abandoned the enterprize ? who assisted from first to last in its execution, but you, you, you ? ”

“ It is too true ! it is too true ! ” sighed the wife, speaking in a calmer tone, and relaxing her hold ; “ I despise you for your unmanly cowardice in yielding to my menaces, and I detest myself for the guilty audacity that impelled you forwards. Yes ; I scorn, I loathe, both myself and you — both the instigator and the instrument of our crime. Joel, let us come to an understanding. I am miserable beyond



“I  
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there  
“I  
were a  
with th  
to me, a  
your life  
volved in  
late, by a  
over a pe  
carry into  
out apprais  
is no chance  
no hope of a  
of again and  
crime remain-

heir. We must undo the wrong that we have perpetrated : it is better late than never. I will go before a magistrate, alone, if you hesitate to accompany me, and confess our crime, and offer to make full restitution of our spoil, by which voluntary surrender we may perhaps—”

“ Gracious Heaven ! ” interrupted the husband, utterly aghast with terror, “ do you mean what you say?—are you mad ? Would you not only steep us once more to the lips in poverty, but expose us to shame, to imprisonment, to the risk of a public execution ? ”

“ By our voluntary confession, and the restoration of our plunder, we may not improbably escape the heavier penalties of the law, and, by thus gaining time for repentance, be enabled to make our peace with Heaven, and be ultimately admitted into the society of our blessed son. With this prospect in view, oh how joyfully would I undergo poverty, scorn,

and very thought  
shudder," said the hus-  
features had been gradu-  
hue. "What ! sink aga-  
and squalid misery !—  
equipage, our rare win-  
dinners, our burnt bra-  
suppers? Horrible !"

Every argument and  
could command was eq-  
appalling scheme of hi-  
buted to a temporary :  
she clung to her projec-  
gedness that gathered sti-  
and Lomax, whose ter-  
tellect, refrained from a  
he saw the inutility, and  
her present irritable mo-

will be herself again," he thought. "I must gain time and watch her closely, and never trust her out of my sight."

The sound of his daughter's voice suggested to him a new and more potent dissuasive than any he had hitherto advanced; he enlarged upon the monstrous cruelty of rushing upon a desperate measure which would inevitably break off Mary's marriage, involve her in their own ignominy, and render her miserable for life.

"You will not," he exclaimed in conclusion, "you will not destroy this innocent, this excellent, this affectionate girl. I am sure you will not. You have not the heart to do it."

"The heart! the heart!" echoed the wife, smiling in bitter spirit. "I *have* no heart. My bosom has emptied itself into the grave where *he* is lying, stiff and stark. But you are right. I had forgotten poor Mary. Better to endure my own misery a little longer, than to entail

shame and misery upon her. But *can* I, *can* I suffer this intolerable anguish? I know not which way to turn me, nor how to act, and I dare not call upon **Heaven** to assist me. Go! begone, leave me! I cannot talk to any one, least of all to *you*. I must commune with my own sad thoughts."

'The heart of Lomax sank within him as he obeyed her, for he saw by her bewildered looks that her faculties were beginning to wander and, though she appeared for the moment to have abandoned her terrific project, he dreaded lest, in some fit of ungovernable passion or dark despair, she might still rush upon its execution.

## CHAPTER VIII.

————— "This, this is woe !

Despair and anguish darken round their view,  
And all but sorrow seems to be untrue."

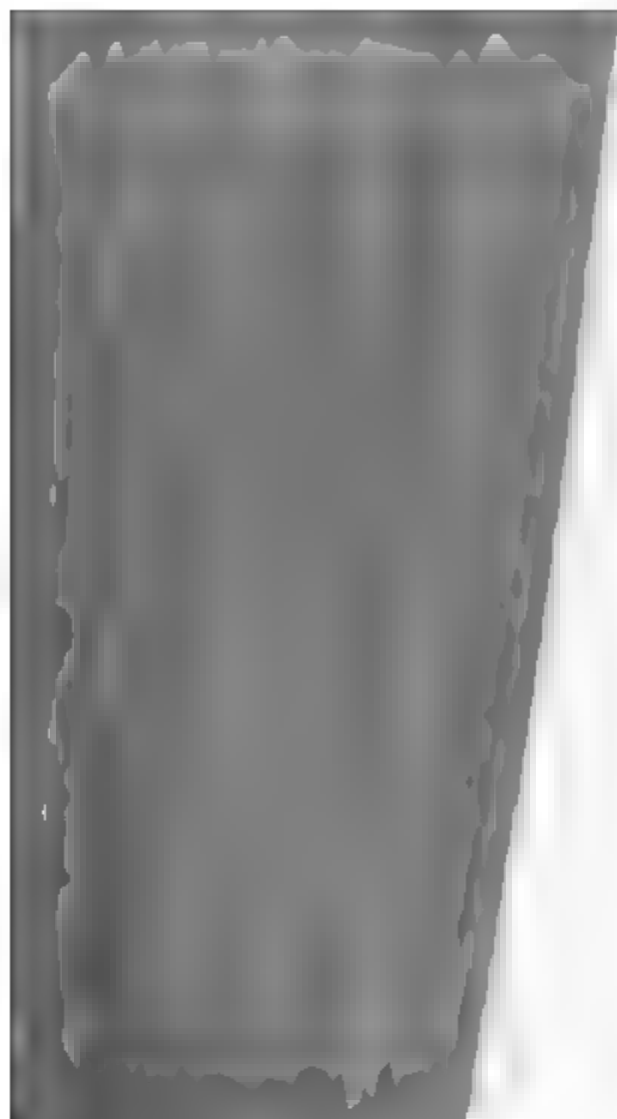
R. MONTGOMERY.

————— "She's lost for ever !

It was a dreadful moment ; not the tears,  
The lingering, lasting misery of years,  
Could match that minute's anguish."

MOORE.

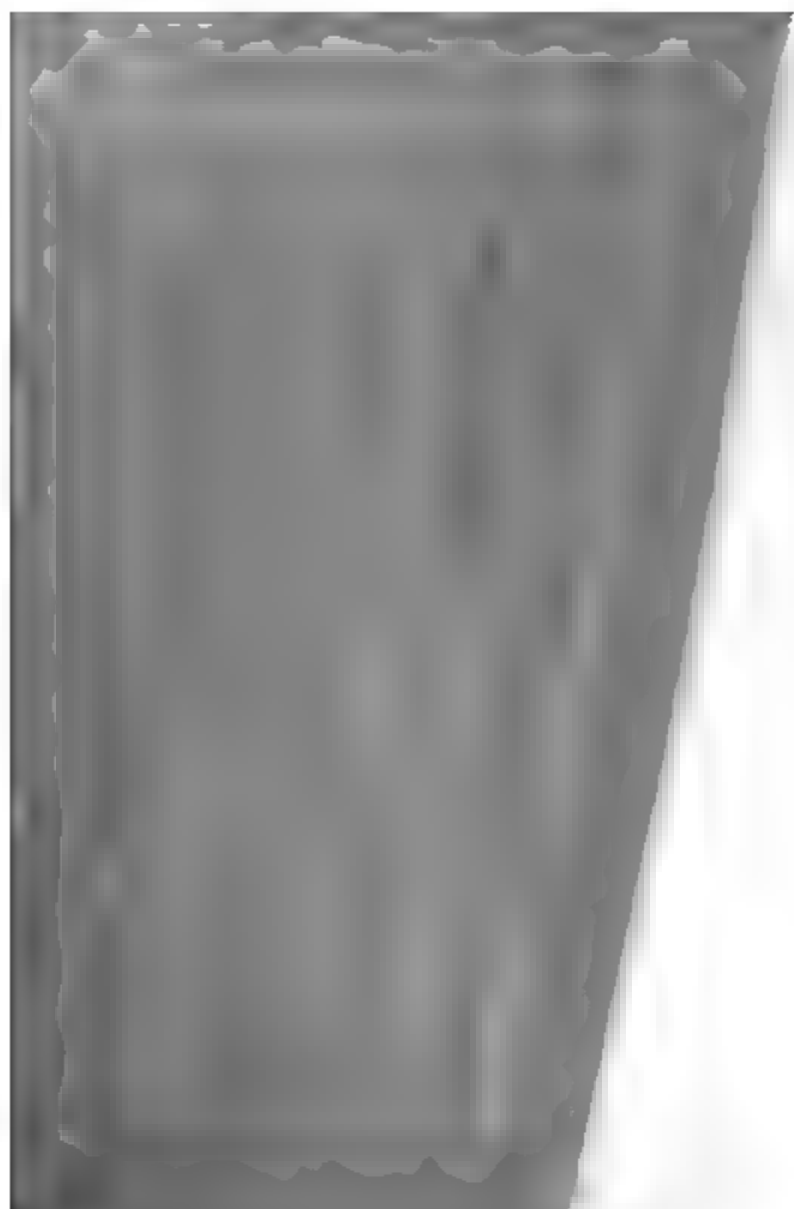
MARY LOMAX'S anxiety, alarms, and dark misgivings, during this most distressing period, we shall not attempt to record. It had been agreed that her marriage should be deferred for three months, and, though the expiration of this term was now near at hand, she could not chase from her mind a sinister foreboding that some unexpected discovery or calamitous event



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not about  
hasty exp  
which fall  
painful see  
Lastly,  
come more  
nor could it  
that the prom  
imbecility in  
sunk, after the  
cated a mind is  
than by error

apprehensions ; she could not assign any specific form to her fears, importunate as they were : they might, indeed, be altogether visionary, and she would not suffer the shadows thus passing over her soul to diminish her gratitude for the sunshine with which it was refreshed at this season of sore trial.

Foremost among the solaces that sustained her was the affectionate sympathy of her lover, who shared her troubles and her counsels, and relieved her, by his considerate interference, from many of the painful duties thrown upon her by the indisposition of her parents. His gentle, unobtrusive virtues, like flowers that blow in the dark, seemed to develop themselves more kindly at this season of gloom, and Mary had never felt herself half so much attached to him as when he dropped the language of courtship, and merged the character of the lover in that of the friend, the comforter, and the adviser.



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his daughter and wife to their fate ; a cruel and perfidious intention, which was accidentally detected by the latter, who warned him, with the bitterest upbraidings, that, if he persisted in his design, she would divulge his guilt to the whole world, and cause his instant apprehension.

Unhappy woman ! she knew not in this distressing emergency how to act, whither to turn ; nor had she any friend to whom she could apply for counsel, even if she could have sought advice, without betraying the fatal secret of her crime. Shattered by the combined assaults of distrust, hatred, remorse, and intense grief, her once powerful mind gave way with a rapidity accelerated by the unnatural state of tension in which it had so long been held. Several times had she stolen out in the night to throw herself upon her son's grave, whence she had been brought back weeping and sobbing, but without uttering a syllable, or oppo-

and, seating herself in it for hours in a seemingly twitching her fingers, an vacant look upon the bed aroused from this gloom glare wildly or menacing and seek some other place again brood without inter sad thoughts.

Sometimes these glooms succeeded by fits of violence stamp upon the floor, tears and shriek with all the vehemence. Nor was the alteration in signal than the change quickly wrought in her commanding figure

nified carriage was exchanged for the equivocal and furtive deportment of the conscience-stricken culprit, who seeks concealment, and shrinks from every passing gaze: while the clear intellect that used to beam forth from her fine expressive features, like a mental sun, was succeeded by a wild or vacant eye, and a look of imbecility, when her face was not disturbed by the angrier paroxysms that gave it a phren-sied aspect.

Lomax had placed in attendance upon his wife a trusty nurse, who was strictly enjoined never to lose sight of her patient, and to lock her up at night, so as to prevent her stealing out of the house. Although her disease only wore the character of incipient aberration of mind, for she was generally in the full possession of her faculties, he thought that a physician might be found who would warrant her confinement in a private mad-house, a measure on which his whole heart was now set, since it



the mind of Lomax, who, coward as he was, would gladly have accomplished the death of his confederate, could it have been done without the possibility of detection. Let not the reader start at this averment. Nothing is so ruthless as the fear engendered by guilt, and rarely, indeed, does it stop at a single transgression. Every offence is pregnant with another, and each comes into the world accompanied by its avenger, for remorse is the twin of crime.

In her early career, Mrs. Lomax would have shuddered at the remotest contemplation of murder ; but we have seen how quickly after her first misdeed in the forgery of the will, she thought of strangling Diedrich Hoffman, when his apprehended recovery threatened her with exposure. Placed in nearly the same predicament, her husband could now meditate a similar enormity, from which he was only withheld by a dread of its discovery, and the hope of effecting his

panics, had recently the  
terror had, in fact, swa  
he required not to be ha  
palling spectre than that  
confession before a mag  
him as a felon.

Grimsby, the fanatic  
been for some time abse  
pened to return at this  
visit to Cypress Hous  
claimed, as he beheld M  
the fearful ravages of a  
“What! have you not  
mighty?—are you still n  
your son?”

“No; I am miserable  
alive,” was her reply, a  
hollow voice. “I am

mad, because I can never hope to rejoin him when I die."

"That despairing thought is the suggestion of the evil spirit: cast it from you, or you will fall into the snares of Satan."

"Fall into his snares!" shouted the guilty woman. "Ha! ha! ha! what foolery is this? He has got my soul already: I feel him grasping it with his talons. Look, look! there he stands—do you not see him yonder, grinning, and mocking, and mowing at me?"

"Ha! is it so!" said Grimsby. "Did I not tell you that God would punish your idolatry by removing your idol, and draw you towards himself, by leaving you no prop or support upon earth. Did I not say that in your hour of darkness and trial I would revisit you, and endeavour to guide you heavenward? Behold, I am come to redeem my pledge."

"Guide me heavenward! guide me to those blissful mansions where *he*, the heart of my

— creature is the abiding  
out of such guilty w  
Grimmoy, who was  
penetration, saw the  
living by a remorse o  
barriers of despair, a s  
it had often been his i  
in the habit of attendi  
execution, and had be  
ministering spiritual i  
sent off some of the vil  
scaffold, enraptured w  
they would ascend inst  
less certainly and imm  
tial beatitudes than the  
gressed.

His fluent eloquence

sternness of his look and manner, and assume a persuasive, almost an ingratiating character, which was but too well calculated to assist the dangerous delusion of his doctrines. In almost daily interviews he impressed upon his willing auditors the utter depravity of human nature, the nullity of good works towards salvation, the powerlessness of the human will, the certainty of election and reprobation, and the impossibility of forfeiting grace. "If you are once of the elect," he argued, "no sin can deprive you of heaven; if you are one of the rejected, no good works can avail towards salvation."

"I was once innocent," sighed Mrs. Lomax. "Oh! if I could only believe that I had ever been in a state of grace!"

A clue was now furnished to the fanatic, who plied his beguiling sophistries with such perseverance and effect, that his disciple eventually believed herself to be one of the elect. Had

parental anxiety, which  
was an insupportable  
the delightful hopes of

The thought of en-  
taining in the society of  
without making restitu-  
eaten, and therefore  
either herself, or her  
not extracting a sen-  
Incessantly did she b  
and feed it by the p  
versal works as were  
Grimsby.

In the same propor-  
her errors, did they in-  
crease the wanderings  
her mind, which now b

remain upon earth to be persecuted with misery and the perpetual apprehensions of discovery and exposure, when she might, as one of the elect, commit suicide without offence, and be instantly transported to the arms and embraces of her beloved son?

No sooner had this desperate project taken possession of her mind than she set about its accomplishment with the cunning and stealth that not unusually characterise a partial derangement. In spite of her now tranquil mood, her terrified and distrustful husband had not neglected any of his precautions, the nurse being still directed to watch her constantly by day, and to lock her chamber-door at night.

This constraint, when she first discovered it, threw her back into one of her violent moods. The idea of being coerced and made a prisoner by her husband, by her accomplice, by one whom she scorned for his pusillanimity,

THE FIRST THING HE  
WAS TO REMEMBER  
WAS TO REMEMBER  
FROM THE WINDOW. THE  
SOUNDING OF THE BELL  
THE FIRST THING HE  
REMEMBERED. THE  
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and, throwing herself on a sofa, presently began to snore aloud. This was the signal for the watchful invalid, who arose noiselessly from her bed, and made it her first care to purloin the key, an object in which she succeeded without difficulty; and a fortunate circumstance for the nurse, whose life, had she awoke and offered any resistance, would hardly have been safe from the calm desperation of her patient.

With the strange inconsistency of a disordered mind, Mrs. Lomax, instead of hurrying to make her escape, proceeded to her wardrobe, arrayed herself in her best attire, put rings upon her fingers and jewels in her hair; now viewing herself in the glass with the assistance of a lamp, and now casting a glance at her sleeping companion, with the fell determination of attempting to strangle her, should her deep slumber be broken.

It was nearly midnight, when, being be-

she took the lamp, gently fastened it behind her, and descend the large old-fash flickering light scarcely the black shadows that her, as if they would have of the mansion, and have tion of her fatal project.

She had watched her husband as to have discovered where the key of the garden gate, found, and, opening the door into the garden. Wet, dark, the night seemed to the desperate purpose bent.

As she passed beneath

moan, and her appearance at this moment was sufficiently strange, not to say spectral, to have appalled the stoutest spectator, had she been encountered by any human eye. From the fear that the noise of her shoes might betray her, she had discarded them, and strode furtively and on tiptoe along the wet walk, her mouth half open, her eyes fixed and staring, her haggard features animated with an expression of wild triumph, and her jewels sparkling, as the lamp threw its fitful light upon her face; while, at other moments, the upper portion of her form was enveloped in darkness, and nothing could be discerned but her bare feet as they moved inaudibly over the soaked and glistening gravel.

The garden gate was soon reached and opened, when she again took up the lamp, not considering, in the disordered state of her mind, that its rays were likely, by attracting observation, to reveal her purpose, and pre-

device met, as it guided  
in deep darkness, hurried  
that led to the river.

From the lateness of  
of the weather, not a  
she had scarcely caught  
quick breathing, though  
suppressed, when she fo  
tremity of a small jetty  
yards into the stream.  
of a high tide darkly  
feet, she clasped her h  
look of wild delight upon  
then, pronouncing the  
the first time since hi  
“ Benjamin ! my beloved  
coming, I am coming ! ”  
threw herself headlong in

they opened to engulf her, and a wharf dog, startled by the noise, barked deeply and repeatedly; but no human ear had caught the sound, no hand was stretched forth to save her. Had the attempt been made, it would probably have been unavailing, for, when the wretched suicide rose, after a brief interval, to the surface, she merely pronounced once more the word "Benjamin!" and then, voluntarily sinking downwards with a stern desperation, compelled herself to die!

The body was found on the following day; and the coroner's inquest, having learnt her previous state of mind, immediately returned a verdict of temporary insanity.

## CHAPTER

IN THE YEAR 1840, IN THE  
MONTH OF JULY, A MAN  
WAS SEEN TO ENTER THE  
DOOR OF A HOUSE

THE RESEMBLING MAN  
WAS THE OWNER OF A GREAT  
MOUNTAIN RANGE, WHO  
STAYED IN THE HOUSE OF  
STRENGTH OF THE MOUNTAIN  
WAS THE MOUNTAIN AND THE  
THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUNTAIN  
THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUNTAIN  
THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUNTAIN  
THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MOUNTAIN

an absolute despondency, although they could neither dispel her melancholy, nor dissipate the dark misgivings which now haunted her with a more importunate obstinacy than ever. In general, she had no belief in omens and prognostics, no superstitious apprehension that "coming events cast their shadows before;" but two or three dreams of evil augury had saddened her heart with the notion that her marriage with Barlow would never take place, a misgiving of which her most strenuous efforts could not altogether disabuse her mind.

In addition to these various sources of annoyance, the lamentable state into which her father sunk immediately after the funeral of his wife agitated her with incessant alarms, and saddened her with the most poignant grief. It might have been surmised that the comparative security in which he was placed by the death of an accomplice, who had so frequently threatened to turn king's evidence, would have tended to

tion of mind and agonies  
became infinitely more de

Accustomed for many  
the ascendancy of his  
upon her for counsel and  
gency, so that the natura  
tics had been confirmed  
implicitly following her  
indeed, he had been frigl  
resistance of her authority  
her almost daily, he had  
the rancour of selfishness  
never denied her talent  
courage, and even, in t  
tion, had depended upo  
whom nothing could dai  
table energies he revive

gone ! the stimulus of her opposition was removed, he was now the sole depository of their fatal secret, and the very consciousness that every thing depended upon himself, that he was left without an adviser or confederate to combat the dreaded Edward Ruddock, completely unhinged and unbalanced a mind which had never possessed sufficient equipoise to support itself without assistance.

Always weak and irresolute, he was now generally unable to decide upon any thing, however trifling, or, if his state of suspense and vacillation became so intolerable as to drive him into some hasty resolution, he wanted courage to carry it into effect, and relapsed into his pristine indecision. Sometimes he recurred to his long-cherished design of absconding to America with all his property ; then, again, as he adverted to the baseness and cruelty of thus deserting Mary, and blasting all her prospects in life, he determined to wait until after her marriage,

## REMARKS

At this juncture, the  
the spectral illustrations of  
the last chapter & therefore  
the with a more serious  
development will probably  
be met by his readers  
andly surprised by his  
rather abrupt and so  
not wanting here, it  
find no other refuge than  
the narrative, and in his  
own way, he has been  
in constant dread of  
sufficiently stimulating,  
pure brandy, indulging in  
the crying in the most  
kind in a state of man

Not with impunity could he thus abuse and stupify his faculties. Rapid and total derangement of his health, together with temporary fits of hypochondriacism, alternating with moods of delirious violence, were the consequences of his excess; but the habit of sottishness had now become so uncontrollable, that if his unhappy daughter denied him access to ardent spirits he became perfectly outrageous, and with horrid imprecations and menaces compelled her to restore the fatal fluid, admitting its destructive tendencies, but vociferating that he was willing to purchase temporary oblivion, even at the expence of madness and death itself.

A violent cold, caught in one of his sleep-walkings, aggravated by neglect and the morbid state of his body, ended in an inflammation, which quickly assumed a threatening aspect, and ultimately baffled all the resources of medicine. His physician, availing himself of a temporary intermission of his patient's sufferings,

and so strange an  
delay.

“What is my poor  
weak-withered wretch,  
sitting at his companion  
— I cannot die yet. I  
cannot die, judgment  
has not come—”

He looked for ever  
seemed to exist in him  
in a prepared state,  
— recommending him  
that may be feared  
— one or five, and he  
— one or two or three!

— these two or three  
— spread the mind of I  
— the power, he feared.

lulled his anguish ; while the flame of life, blazing with that unnatural brightness which sometimes precedes its extinction, imparted to his faculties a clearness of perception to which he had long been a stranger. Alas ! his eyes were unsealed only to be seared with darkness and desolation.

Tied to his bed as to a stake, remorse, anguish, and dread, baited him on every side, tearing his heart with their relentless fangs, while he was utterly unable to obtain respite or relief, in whatever direction he might seek it. Retrospect was intolerable ; to look forward was still more appalling ; there was no time to extenuate the guilt of the past by atonement, or to disarm the future of its terrors by repentance. His sensations told him that Death was hovering with uplifted dart above his head ; and, as his ordinary selfishness became superseded by despair, his thoughts reverted to his daughter, whose affectionate solicitude and attentions, during all his

himself. "She must not be of the terrible perils that Edward Ruddock returns, should a discovery be totally unprepared for the that are even now, perhaps her defenceless head, the her like a thunderbolt.

not, must not, will not, leaving her of her danger, be aware of its existence repel it. She may secretly fly to America — she must with Ruddock — she must spasms warn me to be Mary ! "

Quick as an embodied plied by her instant pre

the suddenness of her appearance seemed to scare her father, who gazed wildly around him, as if he had forgotten his purpose. Recovering his recollection, he bade her lock the door, and seat herself by his side, which she did accordingly ; but it was still some time before he could summon courage to make the confession he intended.

Twice did the wretched man begin and stop short ; at length, however, collecting his bewildered faculties, he said, in a hoarse whisper, “ Mary ! are you sure that we are quite—quite alone—that no one can hear us ? ”

An answer was given in the affirmative.

“ My dear child ! ” he resumed, “ I am dying—I must shortly leave you—I feel the cold iron hand of Death upon my heart — and, ere I am called away to answer for my misdeeds, I would at least make the only atonement that is left, by confessing them.”

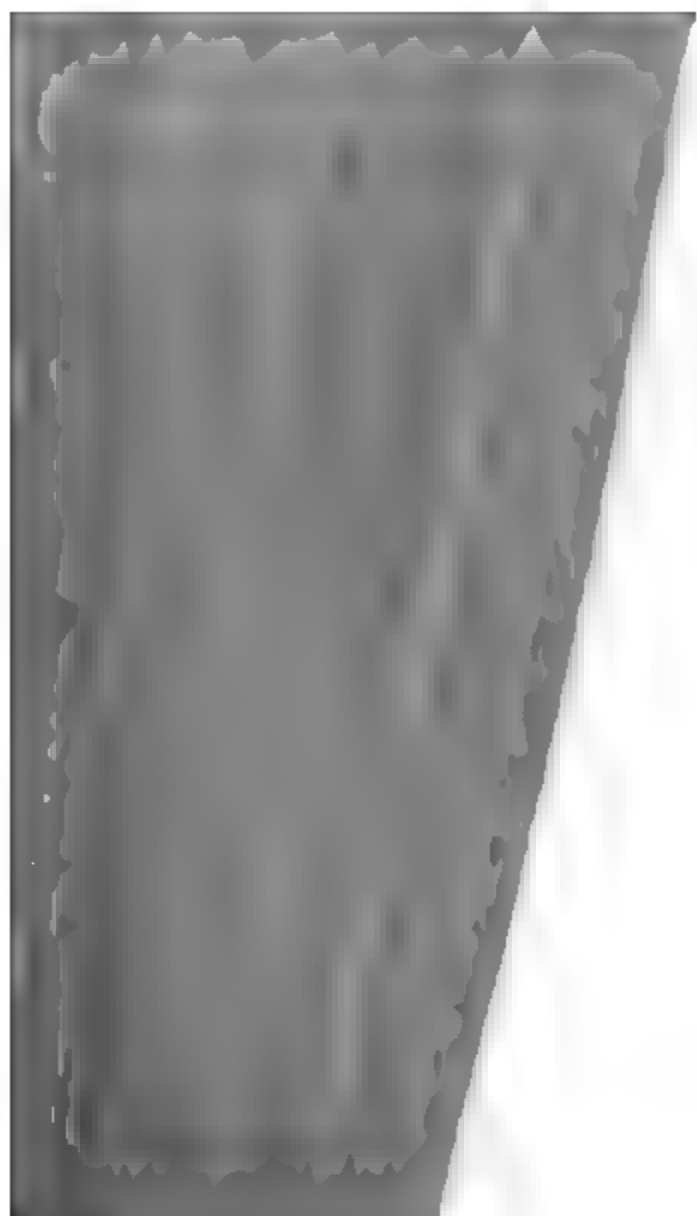
“ Shall I send for a clergyman, dear father ?

**THE**

miliating confession as concisely as possible, he continued :—

“ Mary ! I am a culprit, a criminal, a felon ! The large fortune we possess was obtained by an infamous fraud. Hoffman had left the whole of it to his nephew, Edward Ruddock, but, at the instigation of your mother — who wanted, however, to enrich her beloved Benjamin, rather than herself, or me, or you — I forged a new will in my own favour, and defrauded the rightful heir ! ”

“ Forged a will ! ” shrieked the daughter, starting from her seat, and striking her hands violently together, while her countenance expressed an agony of consternation and amazement ; “ forged a will ! — O God ! my latent misgivings, and your own prelude to the announcement, had prepared me for some deed of darkness, but never, never did I anticipate any thing half so horrible as this ! We are lost, utterly lost ! ” And she again clasped her hands,

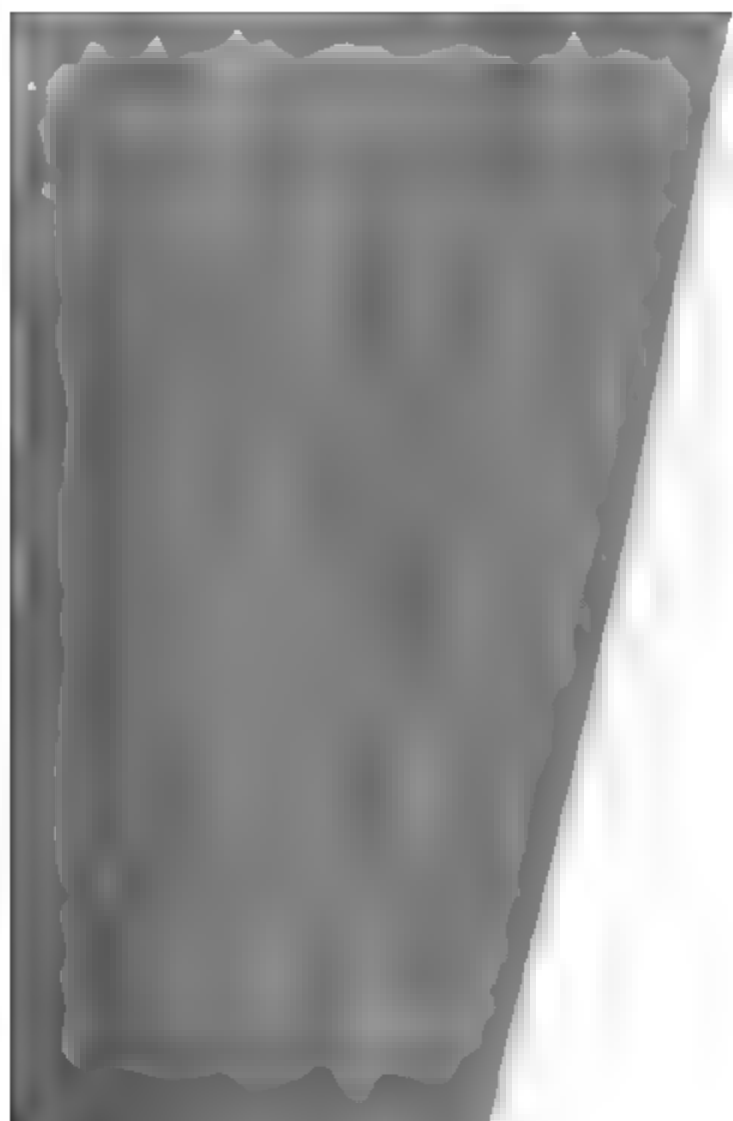


I  
 P  
 all  
 all  
 I - A  
 when  
 that  
 but  
 standing  
 Throat  
 go mad  
 A cold  
 he shrank,  
 clothes; w  
 these phant  
 seen, by the d  
 present alarm,

himself had hung upon a peg, in a corner of the chamber.

Humouring his delusion — the most effectual means, as she had found by experience, for dispelling it — she assured him that his enemy had fled from the room, a fact which her miserable parent verified by a stealthy and timid glance around the apartment; when he drew a deep inspiration, and continued, “So, I can breathe again, now I am no longer haunted by that menacing spectre with his basilisk eye, that seems to look through my very heart. Is he out of hearing, gone, fled? Well, then, what did he witness after all, that you should be afraid of him when I am gone? He saw me in the dead of night, committing a paper to the flames, but he knew not its nature, its contents, and I defy him to prove that it was the genuine will. Edward Ruddock, when we last heard tidings of him, was confined to his bed by a dangerous malady. Let us hope that he died of

"Yes, I  
ing with a  
land upon



shouted Lomax, as he suddenly started up in his bed.

“The eye of God!” replied Mary, casting her looks reverently downwards.

A long shuddering groan escaped from the bosom of her guilty parent, who again cowered beneath the bed-clothes, as if to hide himself, hoarsely whispering, “It is too true! it is too true! I am indeed a lost and guilty wretch! God has seen, and God will punish my transgression!”

There was a silence of several minutes, for the voice of Lomax was stifled in despair, and the emotions that tore the bosom of Mary, too distressful for utterance, were only to be gathered from her gestures. With an expression of the most poignant anguish, she cast her eyes appealingly upwards, as if imploring mercy for her father, repeatedly clasped her hands together, shook her head as if in utter hopelessness, compressed her lips in the vain attempt to check her

"Do not, do not weep  
Lomax, when he again  
"it is fit that I should  
of no common turpitude  
good, so pure, whose will  
and unbroken performance  
Mary! I cannot, cannot  
deep affliction. Cheer up  
may yet go well, so far  
cerned—and pay attention  
—it is my last wish, nay,  
nay, my command, that  
take place as soon after  
will allow; for, should  
land, or any discovery  
infinitely less consequence  
no longer solitary and  
with a protector by your  
low."

"Marriage with Barlow!" vehemently exclaimed Mary, giving impetuous utterance to the bitter reflections over which she had been brooding; "marriage with Barlow! away, away for ever with the dishonest, the nefarious thought! As surely as I am now sitting by your side, this hidden crime will be discovered; it must, it must!—it will be divulged, made manifest, published to all the world; and, believing this as firmly as I do my own existence, think you that I would be base and fraudulent enough to give my hand to Evelyn Barlow? What! shall I suffer him to marry the daughter of a felon?—shall I expose the man I love above all others to a life-long misery and disgrace which I would not heap upon my bitterest enemy? Shall I subject him to the ignominy of a public trial, and the compulsory restitution of my fortune? Shall I knowingly, basely, treacherously, inflict a wife upon him with whom he could never walk abroad without being pointed at by the uplifted finger

I know not; for I am :  
this terrible revelation :  
mind is already made :  
nitively—I cannot and w  
cruel and unwarrantable  
Barlow."

" I did not advert to t  
to me," said Lomax ; " I  
principles, and the decisi  
now see it all. Too clear!  
fatal consequences of my  
Heaven that I had never  
terribly, and yet how j  
wretched accomplice b  
crime ! The dear boy,  
it was committed, was an  
a premature death. No

either of his parents enjoy after the day of their transgression. One has terminated her miserable career by suicide ; and I, wretch that I am, I am dying amid bodily and mental anguish, with the additional pang of knowing that I have destroyed the happiness of, and entailed probable disgrace and poverty upon, a beloved daughter, the sole survivor of our family. If these are the consequences, even of a successful and undiscovered crime, oh ! how sharp, how intolerable, must be the agony of that which is exposed and punished ! ”

Mary made no reply, for she was oppressed with sad thoughts ; and, feeling the truth of what her father had just uttered, she knew not what to say, nor how to offer him a single word of consolation. Lomax, too, sunk into a desponding reverie ; his thoughts were upon his daughter. Adverting to her painful and impassioned declaration on the subject of her marriage, he gave way to an unusual burst of tenderness and ruth ;

morseless enemy; you in  
my memory; but I must  
will you, can you forgive

“O my dear father! I  
hand and pressing it to  
should implore pardon  
fear you have constric-  
knew not what I was  
came me. Alas! what  
prospects compared to  
selfishly have intruded  
Not from me, not from  
offended Deity, should  
and mercy. Oh! let  
this ‘all-important duty  
instantly for a clergyman

“No, I cannot bear

secret. But you can kneel down and pray for me, dear Mary. Your intercessions, my innocent and injured child, may perhaps be heard. As for me, desperate as is my need, I dare not implore remission of my sins."

In obedience to the wishes of her father, Mary threw herself upon her knees by the bed-side, and, trusting to the spontaneous eloquence inspired by deep feeling, besought the forgiveness of Heaven for the dying penitent. As Lomax gazed upon the pallid features of his daughter, rendered still more wan by the deep mourning in which she was arrayed, as he marked the trembling of her clasped hands, the suffusion of her upturned eyes, and listened to the vehement earnestness of her appealing voice, the deep agony of his soul seemed for a moment to be allayed.

But this respite was of brief duration. After a short interval his pains returned, a paroxysm of dismay succeeded to the calm, and he

pathos, or appeal  
reader, we have never  
the pen of the novelist.

Willingly, therefore,  
around the death-bed  
morning sun arose, he

## CHAPTER X.

——— " Think upon my grief,  
And on the justice of my flying hence,  
To keep me from a most unholy match."

SHAKESPEARE.

RARELY, perhaps, in the history of human calamity, had a young and orphaned female been assailed by a more harrowing combination of trials and distresses than those with which Mary Lomax was now doomed to contend. The loss of a beloved brother, the quickly succeeding death of both her parents under circumstances so awful and appalling, the dreadful, the humiliating secret bequeathed by them, and the probable disgrace and desti-

the acute anguish, and  
all her hopes, involved  
ment of her marriage v

Having fully made  
cessity of this heart-  
wished, if possible, to  
with him until she sh  
her course of action,  
mode for acquainting  
With this view she  
own room, stating, as  
that she was too ill and  
support a conversation

Barlow, in the mea  
delicacy and attention  
the arrangements of th

mistress, and best calculated to save her from every painful application or exertion.

Stunned and astounded as she had been at first, Mary obtained leisure, in this most distressing interval, to rally a little from the effects of the visitation that had fallen upon her, and to summon her energies to her aid.

Her naturally strong mind seemed to be invigorated by the necessity for exertion; and, although her heart was wrung, tortured, lacerated to its very core, she never faltered for a single moment, when she had ultimately decided what course to adopt. The more she reflected, the more deeply rooted became her conviction that she was imperatively bound to separate herself from Barlow, at once and for ever.

Upon this subject her first resolution and her last were identical. To delude him into marriage and into ultimate misery and disgrace, by a fraudulent suppression of the truth,



1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be addressed. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

“ My dear Friend !

“ With a frame debilitated by sleeplessness and ill-health, with a bleeding and almost broken heart, I am called upon to discharge a duty of the most distressing nature, a duty rendered still more agonising by the consciousness that it will both afflict and affront you, without my having the power to explain the motives of my conduct, and the stern, the inexorable necessity under which I am acting.

“ O, Mr. Barlow ! all our fond vows must be recalled, all our prospects of mutual happiness are gone for ever, our engagement must be instantly and definitively broken off — I can never, never, never be your wife ! A disclosure of the most harrowing description, made to me by my father upon his death-bed, has placed an insuperable bar between us. Ask me not its nature ; it is an impenetrable secret. If you knew it, you would be the first to approve my inflexible resolution, the first to thank

“ Alas ! what a ha-  
mine ! I am innocent  
tions are unaltered ; as  
mystery of my position  
capricious, heartless, and  
and hateful in your eyes  
you once professed for  
my pride to have me  
judge me in charity as  
upon the fallen, cruci-  
Most solemnly can I  
attentions and kindne-  
me more than ever : I  
that, in thus suddenly  
hence, and flying, as  
I am alone

whose happiness is infinitely more dear to me than my own.

“Farewell, farewell for ever! When you think of me, let it be with pity and with pardon. Better would it be, however, that you should forget me altogether, by transferring your affections to some other, who, while she appreciates the value of your attachment not less fully than myself, may be at liberty to reciprocate it — a privilege which can never be enjoyed by

“Your ill-fated friend,

“MARY LOMAX.”

For the delay in writing and transmitting this letter there were other and most cogent reasons, besides the state of her bodily and mental health. Struck by the singular resemblance of her fate to that of Helen, although the sudden infraction of her intended marriage proceeded from so different a cause, she re-



power on earth could have forced him to prepare and sign any such instrument — a repugnance which he had little occasion to conquer, as he had no relation in the world but Mary, who succeeded, as a matter of course, to all his property.

The legal proceedings necessary to establish this claim occasioned a delay of several days, and, before she would trust herself to the hazards of a journey, she thought it her duty to make her will.

From the first moment when her father had stung her ear by the tidings of his guilt, she had resolved to restore to the rightful proprietor every shilling that was left of the fortune wrested from him : and, not knowing at present how or where to find him, she determined to secure this purpose, in the event of her own death, by naming him her sole heir.

Having made these arrangements, she left London, accompanied by her maid, on the very

below. So profound  
he perused it, that for a  
the evidence of his see  
and over in increasing  
arriving at any other co  
whole was an inexplical  
writing, indeed, was M  
entertain no doubt ; bu  
nounced, utterly oppos  
previous sentiments as  
astounded him.

In the hope of obtai  
the mystery, he hurried  
solved to demand an int  
tion. Mary had left it  
nouncing her intention

quitting London, that it became impossible to track her course.

Baffled in every attempt of this nature, the disconcerted Barlow hastened to communicate the strange tidings to his father, who, instead of condoling with him as he had expected, openly expressed his delight at the intelligence. Upright and honourable in his principles, and warmly attached to his son, the old gentleman would never have interfered with an engagement which had advanced so far towards completion ; but many recent occurrences had combined to make him deeply regret that it had ever been formed. The mystery and the fatality that had latterly lowered over the whole Lomax family, the quarrels of the parents, the suicide of the mother, the low sottishness of the father, and the suspected mental derangement of both parties, constituted an array of objections which had recently awakened in his mind an utter aversion from the marriage.

have. In no other way  
handsomely out of the  
girl comes forward and  
whether you will or no,  
yourself; and God forbids  
attempt to renew the en-  
don't look so downcast  
happiest day of your life  
tell you."

"But what is your  
mysterious letter?" in-

"I am no guesser of  
plain man of the world  
matter is this: when I  
have you, her brother  
alive. They are now de-  
unexpectedly the sole

she may do better than marry a shipbuilder's son."

"On my life, sir, you do her injustice," exclaimed Evelyn with some warmth; "a less ambitious or sordid girl I never knew. Mary is incapable of any thing so ungenerous, so base. Inscrutable as they may seem, I am confident that her motives are good."

"‘Disclosure of the most painful description,’" muttered the father, poring over the letter for the second time—"‘insuperable bar—‘curse of your whole future life’—‘innocent of all offence’—why, where are your eyes, boy? The meaning of the whole matter is clear enough. Her father has confessed to her on his death-bed, probably under a solemn injunction of secrecy, that there is hereditary madness in the family; and, like a good girl, and a wise girl, and an honest girl, and an innocent girl, for such she is, after all, she will not, with the knowledge of this ‘*insuperable bar*,’ hold

or she wouldn't have  
father was mad, or he  
in his sleep, and wand  
time, starting at nothin  
berish to himself. Benja  
other boy; if he had liv  
have found his way to B  
be something odd and w  
self—perhaps she alrea  
family malady—or she  
from her home in this  
accompanied by her mai  
the world, the Lord kn  
This being the case, and  
doubt upon the subject,  
than take her advice—  
and look about you for

don't deny her attractions—without being descended from crazy and suicidal parents."

In the impossibility of obtaining any other satisfactory clue to the meaning of the letter, Evelyn, after again carefully perusing it, was reluctantly compelled to adopt his father's solution, which, however painful, brought with it one redeeming consideration; it justified Mary's conduct—it absolved her from all blame—it confirmed her averment that he would be the first to approve her resolution, the first to thank Heaven that their nuptials had been prevented. Coinciding in the inevitable necessity for this severance, and the propriety of her departure from London, he felt that she had decided rightly in concealing the place of her retreat, so as to cut off at once, and for ever, all communication between them. Under these painful circumstances, he had no alternative but to yield to the decree of fate—to bear the disappointment of his hopes with as much for-

titude as possible, and to trust that change of scene, and the healing influences of time, would remove the deep dejection that now oppressed his heart.

Mary Lomax, not knowing in what other direction to betake herself, had determined to seek refuge with Helen Owen, until she should be enabled to decide upon her future plans. In the hurry and anxiety of her departure from London, she had omitted to apprise her of her intention, so that the surprise of her friend, when, on her arrival at Ilfracombe, which was now the place of Helen's residence, she proceeded to her house, and threw herself into her arms, may be more easily imagined than described.

“My dear Helen!” exclaimed the traveller, after the first flurry of greeting and inquiry had somewhat subsided, “I come to claim your friendship and assistance in a predicament so extremely delicate and painful, that I hesitated

for some time before I could make up my mind to intrude upon your retreat; but I said to myself, if the cases were reversed — if Helen were in my place, and I in her's — how should I act? My heart told me that I should receive you with joy, and I did not therefore hesitate another moment in directing my flight hither, concluding that your's would equally sympathize with a friend in distress."

"Thank you, thank you, my dear Mary!" exclaimed Helen, affectionately pressing her to her heart; "you have decided in a manner worthy of yourself, and most flattering to me. Oh! how delighted am I to see you once more, though I little expected it so soon after the late melancholy occurrences."

"Alas, dear Helen! I have known nothing but melancholy occurrences — nothing but losses, calamities, and horrors, since last we parted. Let me hasten to apprise you of the total change in my situation and prospects.

“ Penniless ! destitute  
wealthy, and your marri-

“ It will never, never,  
posed Mary in a broken  
eyes. “ All is over ! I  
broken it off ; but not for  
of Mr. Barlow, who is  
amiable and excellent.”

“ Good heavens ! do I  
stand you rightly ? We  
have driven you to such  
comprehensible, proceed

“ *That* is a secret which  
locked up in my own breast  
consent to remain here,  
you must not

suitor, but my peace of mind requires it — a cruel necessity drives me on — I cannot help myself.”

“ I am too glad to have you upon any terms, my dear friend, not to give you the promise you require. Upon this interdicted subject I swear to you that my lips shall be perpetually sealed.”

“ Thank you, thank you a thousand times,” ejaculated Mary. “ Perhaps I may not long be a restraint upon your curiosity, or a burthen upon your friendship, for I only purpose to remain here until I shall be enabled to settle my future proceedings.”

“ And why should not your plan embrace a permanent residence at Ilfracombe, beneath the roof that now covers us? There is so marked, so marvellous, a similarity in our fates, at least upon *one* point, and there must be so close a sympathy in our feelings, that, having been fortunately thrown together, we ought never to

my constant companion  
supply the loss of my d

Mary made a suitab  
tionate speech, and the  
the conversation to les  
subjects ; but she was  
long. Exhausted by the  
and the agitation of her  
wish her friend good  
early hour, and to retire

It was her first care, t  
tions of Helen had rece  
residence, and in som  
equanimity, to write to  
inquiring whether he co  
of Edward D. . . . .

In his reply, the Doctor stated that the object of her inquiry, after having recovered from the dangerous fever with which he had been attacked at Buenos Ayres, had abandoned his intention of returning to Europe, and had penetrated into the interior of the country, on a commercial expedition, since which time he had not been heard of. The Doctor added that Ruddock had been long ago apprized of the nature of his late uncle's will, for that he had procured a copy to be taken in London, and had forwarded it to him. The agent employed for this purpose happened to be a tall thin man in a low-crowned hat, an accidental coincidence, which, as it will be recollected, had almost scared Lomax out of his wits, on his visit to Doctors' Commons.

Delighted to find that Ruddock was still living and restored to health, Mary not only caused advertisements to be inserted in a variety of newspapers, offering a handsome re+

and returned to Buenos Ayres, and  
agent to Buenos Ayres, and  
to find him out, and pro  
to assist him in his rese  
a letter which revealed  
although in guarded ter  
mediate return of Ruddo

Having satisfied her co  
tion of every measure t  
to attain the great desig  
was fixed, Mary was at l  
her many griefs, and to  
an object not less assis  
beauties of the neighbor  
had ever been a passiona  
than by the delightful

moderate but equable cheerfulness, a frame of mind more conducive to happiness than the exuberant spirits in which she had heretofore indulged, and which were not seldom followed by a proportionate exhaustion. While Mary's griefs were fresh and poignant, she condoled with her, read appropriate books to her, and accompanied her in little excursions to the most picturesque spots in the vicinity, until she had gradually weaned her from the contemplation of her sorrows : and, when her tone of mind became sufficiently invigorated to sympathize with livelier sallies, Helen gave a loose to her constitutional sprightliness, and put forth all those powers of amusement with which she was so eminently gifted.

Though they had been subjected to sore trials and heart-withering disappointments, both parties possessed the inappreciable blessing of an unaccusing conscience ; both could look back on their past conduct not only with com-

Heaven, had they abandoned  
unavailing regret or desp

Time rolled on without  
of Ruddock ; and, at the  
marked by any other occu  
cementation of their mutual  
more intimate knowledge  
of one another's virtues  
resumed their character  
which was marked in Ma  
ness, and in her friend by  
ness, easily exalted into,

## CHAPTER XI.

————— “ She, like a moon in wane,  
Faded before him, coward, nor could restrain  
Her fearful sobs, self-folding, like a flower,  
That faints into itself at evening hour.”

KEATS.

As a proof of her complete conquest over her ill-fated passion, and of the calm self-possession to which Mary was by this time restored, we may state that, when she read in a newspaper the announcement of Evelyn Barlow's marriage with a girl of whose amiability and accomplishments she remembered to have heard honourable mention, the intelligence only occasioned a slight throbbing of her heart, and she was enabled to retire to her own chamber

learn that he was enjoy  
another, an unalloyed  
untoward fate might  
into a life of the mos  
had he prosecuted his

A few days after the  
tials had been made k  
disagreeably surprised  
the itinerant preacher  
operated with so sinist  
of her unfortunate mot  
practices having been  
of the religious comm  
attached himself, he  
from their pale, a fact

ment to a chapel in London. Having lately learnt the death of her father, Grimsby had ferreted out the address of the rich heiress, and had travelled to Ilfracombe with the intention of obtaining her favour, and offering himself as a substitute for the discarded Barlow.

Hopeless, and even preposterous as such a project may appear, it did not present itself to Grimsby as being surrounded with any insurmountable difficulties, for it fell within his cognizance that obscure and unattractive preachers of his own persuasion had achieved matches not less advantageous than that which he was contemplating.

Rendered reckless by his desperate circumstances, since he was now doomed to begin the world afresh, without either means or character, he thought the enterprise was, at all events, well worth a trial. If it succeeded, he was made for life, elevated beyond the most aspiring

to lose, every thing to w

Quickened by these  
sharp spur of necessity  
daily visitant to Mary, a  
best attire, brightening  
with a leering smile, as  
cant tenderness of ton  
conversational powers, i  
means deficient, to such  
most likely to ingratiate  
heiress.

Helen, instantly per  
visited it with unmeasu  
little pains to conceal  
she considered his intru  
an imminent threat

the feelings of a man who had been the friend and guest of her parents, and had hitherto given her no real ground of offence, for she did not believe that he entertained any serious thoughts of offering her his hand.

Grimsby, naturally sanguine and arrogant, construed her forbearance into encouragement, and in a few days declared himself her lover, reminding her of her unprotected situation, and urging the prudence of her contracting a respectable marriage, as a defence against the sharpers and adventurers with whom she was sure to be besieged.

Provoked out of her usual placidity, Mary gave such a peremptory and indignant rejection to his suit, that his wrath was kindled, and he had the audacity to recommend a reconsideration of her verdict, since his mind was made up to have her, and he was not to be disappointed, and still less offended with impunity. In answer to this insolence she rang the

indistinct lights, while  
tures were inflamed wit

Grimsby had, in on  
truth : he was not a ma  
at any time, and least o  
ment, when his tempe  
circumstances desperate  
or to mar his fortunes ;  
carry off the heiress ;  
that, if he could conve  
would consent to marry  
could make it appear th  
ling fugitive) rather th  
with a blemished reputa

For the execution of  
the sea offered him tem

an evening ride to some of the Tors or hills in the neighbourhood. Helen, however, being confined to the house by a slight indisposition, Mary had been fain for the last few days to make her favourite excursion with no other companion than an old groom, a remarkably trustworthy person, as she believed, and a more than sufficient protection in that quiet and secluded part of the country. Accident possessed Grimsby with the fact that this man had formerly been imprisoned for a misdemeanour, and was by no means a reclaimed character, though he affected a particular starchness and steadiness in his present occupation.

The display of twenty guineas, of which at this juncture there were very few in circulation, and the promise of the horses belonging to his mistress, soon won him over to be his accomplice in the meditated outrage, which was represented to him as of trivial importance, since it was to terminate in marriage. Having thus



1997

the mound, and bore her off in his powerful arms to a boat that was in waiting ; while his accomplice rode across the country, intending to embark for Ireland with the horses, which were to be the further reward of his villany.

So rapidly had all this been accomplished, that Mary, paralysed and aghast, had neither offered resistance, nor even attempted to call for aid ; but as her bewildered faculties returned, she shrieked aloud, when the ruffian stopped her cries with a handkerchief, and bade her be silent as she valued her life. The sound of his hated voice, and a glimpse of his features, hardened into an expression of fixed desperation, revealed to his victim the nature and the extent of her danger ; but her energies abandoned her when she had most need of their exertion, and, after a short struggle, she uttered a deep sigh, closed her eyes, and sunk back upon his shoulder, overcome with faintness.

trouble. Look !” he  
the speeding groom, “  
flies from the just ver  
husband. Now, boatm  
me one of the oars, as  
the skiff. She ought to  
in.”

With these words he  
shore, but had scarce  
when, upon looking al  
“Avast, comrade, avast  
oars, until yonder boat  
track has cleared us ;”  
threw part of a tarpaulin  
to conceal her body.

— . . . —

opened her eyes, and obtained a glance of the approaching boat, in which she was delighted to perceive a lady and children. Fortunately, she had sufficient presence of mind to remain silent and motionless until it drew near, when, rallying all her energies, she suddenly started up, and extending both her arms, screamed as loudly as she could:—"Help!—help! for God's sake, help me!" and continued her outcries, even after the savage Grimsby had ferociously thrust her down in the boat, and again thrown the tarpaulin over her.

"Villain!" cried a man's voice from the opposite boat, which was instantly steered down upon them, "what is the meaning of this cowardly, this unmanly cruelty to a woman?"

"Keep aloof! or you are a dead man!" roared Grimsby in a tone of fury. "This guilty creature is my wife, and, if you attempt to interfere between us, I swear by Heaven that

is bearing me off from  
save me, as you are men

The boats were now  
Grimsby, seeing that  
previously spoken was  
arrest his progress, and  
such a furious but ineffe  
a heavy boat-hook, tha  
self in the effort, fell fo  
head with a stunning  
opposite gunwale, tumbl  
instantly sunk never to

At the very instant  
Mary again started up  
convulsive spring into t

upon her escape, she burst for a moment into an hysterical laugh, and then, sinking down, relapsed into insensibility.

“Lie to,” said the stranger to his men : — “keep a sharp look-out, and let us see whether we cannot pick up this good-for-nothing rapscallion. I would not have him perish, though he would certainly have knocked my brains out had I not avoided the blow. Pull ahead, sirrah ! and search for your comrade.”

The latter words were addressed to Grimsby's boatman, who, not liking the complexion of the affair, left his employer to his fate, and made the best of his way to rejoin the skiff ; while the stranger, after lying to for some time, concluded, as was, indeed, the case, that the perpetrator of the outrage, disabled by the concussion he had received in falling, had been prevented from making the least exertion to save himself, and had perished. The rowers were, accordingly, ordered to proceed to the

liverers, whom she found  
tion to be husband and  
quitted her to attend to  
mising to return in an hour  
health

Through the good office  
a restorative which she was  
swallow, Mary was suffi  
the expiration of the time  
her rescuers, to whom she  
to express her heartfelt gr  
in the agitation and bewi  
ment, she had omitted to p  
came alone, apologizing to  
wife, whose attentions were

most fervent acknowledgments, and invoking blessings on his head; "I am glad to see that you have found your tongue, and look so cheerily, and I trust that after a night's sleep you will be as well as ever; but, as to thanks, you owe me none, none whatever, for I should have been a brute rather than a man had I not done as much for any woman in danger and distress. It was a lucky circumstance, to be sure, that we happened to come athwart you just at that moment. We are but now arrived in England from a long voyage, and our ship was bound to Bristol; but, as my wife is a native of Ilfracombe, and has friends in the place, she wished to be put ashore, and to remain here with the children, during my absence in London, where I have some important business to settle. If your thanks, therefore, are due to any one, which I do not admit, you must not give them to me, but to Mrs. Rud-dock."

name ——."

"Edward Ruddock,  
monly called Ned Ruddo

"And had you an unc  
Bristol?"

"Ay, old Diedrich H  
such, but he was little  
hearted uncle of the bab  
cut me out of his will  
girl without his consent  
ship myself off to South  
world in the best way I

"Gracious Heaven  
"what an unexpected,  
counter! And do you  
account of ——, have

answer," said Ruddock, smiling, "since you have never told me your name."

"My name is Mary Lomax."

"Why, then, this is a lucky hit, indeed! something like those marvellous meetings one reads of in a romance. Yes, I did receive your letter, but it directed me to an attorney in London, for which place it was my intention to have set off to-morrow morning."

"O, Mr. Ruddock!" exclaimed Mary, whose confusion and embarrassment became evident as she spoke; "I have disclosures of the most momentous nature to make to you, but—but ——." She hesitated, for she recollected that Helen was present, and the conflict of her emotions deprived her for the moment of the power of speech.

"I see how it is," said Ruddock. "You have a long story to tell me, but are too much flurried and surprised to set about it just now, and I don't wonder at it, for methinks you

the morning, and by the  
you in better trim for tal  
wished the friends good  
departure.

"I perceive, by you  
Mary to Helen, "how  
amazed you, and I regret  
your curiosity. My inter  
Mr. Ruddock must be a  
reference to the secret  
pledged not to penetrate

"That pledge I sh  
smallest attempt to for  
the truth, I feel little int  
tion you have made, nor

frank, plain-spoken person, whose honesty and amiability, if I may judge by his looks and manner, may well compensate for the absence of a more polished urbanity. Be he who or what he may, his apparition appears to have quite banished the composure you were beginning to resume, and so, to cut off all further parley, I shall leave you for the present, and send Horton to assist you to bed."

On the following morning, Mary awaited the coming of Ruddock with a comparative self-possession, which, however, she found it extremely difficult to preserve when she commenced her painful and humiliating task.

She accomplished it, nevertheless ; hurrying over the narrative of her parents' crime, which, with a truly filial piety, she endeavoured to extenuate, by attributing it to a temporary alienation of mind, and concluding her recital by stating that she had practised a strict economy since her father's death, and was now

shaking that was left  
Radzick's emotions due  
the vehemence of his  
honourable conduct, we  
scribe.

"Well," he exclaims  
that a bad action entai  
and the account you  
parents abundantly c  
but you little thought  
wrote such a pressing  
England, that you w  
for your conscientiou  
Thus, however, by a  
circumstances, has it

this moment have been tossing on the Scottish shore, at the mercy of the villain, Grimsby."

"It bears, indeed," said Mary, "the aspect of a providential intervention, for which I shall never cease to feel grateful."

"My means at present are but scanty," pursued Ruddock; "I have a growing family, and every man is entitled to his own, so I shall not hesitate to take what you seem so eager to surrender; but it must not be the whole; we will make a compromise of some sort. At all events, you must retain a comfortable independence for yourself."

"Not a guinea, not a shilling; to clear my conscience, I must completely clear my coffers. Upon this point my determination is inflexible."

"May I ask whether you have any other means of subsistence?"

"None, whatever; but that is quite immaterial: my friend, Helen, has enough for both of

us, and she has extorted from me a promise to reside with her permanently, and to share her fortune."

"You are a couple of brave, noble girls, and worthy of each other," cried Ruddock; "and if you will allow myself and my wife, who is one of the best and most cheerful little creatures in the world, to become your neighbours, and to claim your friendship — but we will talk of that another time. I can't stop now—excuse my running away so abruptly—I must not lose a moment in telling Mrs. Ruddock of our surprising good fortune. Dear Fanny! how delighted she will be! And so am I, but it is more on her account, and that of the children, than my own."

"One word before you go," cried Mary. "You must solemnly promise me never to divulge, except to your wife, what has now passed between us. It is the only favour I shall ever ask of you. If possible, I would

screen the memory of my parents from shame and ignominy, while I, myself, am most anxious to avoid the disgrace of being pointed at as the daughter of a felon."

"On the honour of a man, I pledge myself to what you enjoin," said Ruddock, who then hurried off to convey to his wife the joyful tidings of their unexpected enrichment.

## CHAPTER

• Ah! what a life were this!  
Gives not the hawthorn-bush  
Time both a rich embroidered

DELIGHTING more and  
in Mary, and feeling for her  
attachment as she grew be-  
her inability and her in-  
after much persuasion, he  
promise that she would be  
permanent companion.

Mary's final avowal th

whose delicate and affectionate importunity it was impossible to resist.

During the past two years, each had experienced such a soothing alleviation of her sorrows, each had become so thoroughly endeared to each other, and to her present mode of life, that neither could bear the thought of a change of any sort, and still less of a separation. To secure their friendship and happiness, so far at least as the caprices of fate are susceptible of control, Helen determined never to marry, a resolution not hastily adopted only to be as lightly broken, but one to which she had been impelled by many grave considerations, and adhered to in after life with a firm consistency.

Disappointed in her first love, her heart might be said to have already tasted the sorrows of widowhood, an ordeal of which she dreaded to incur a second risk : nothing could reconcile her to the chances of being severed

tain, for a contingency  
All these motives were  
equal potency on the  
she not felt herself  
bacy by that paramour  
propriety which had  
her engagement with

"If there be an  
of sympathy," cried  
cheerful moods, "O  
dear Mary, to live as  
both love-lorn dames  
ruined, not however  
disparagement of the  
place ourselves defi

rated class, than witlings and satirists are willing to allow. Here have I just been reading the tirade of a malicious scribbler, who details the progress of an old maid's embitterment at and after the following numerical fashion.

“ 1st. She professes to dislike balls, finding it difficult to get a partner.

“ 2nd. Wonders that men can leave sensible women to flirt with chits.

“ 3d. Becomes jealous of the praises of other females, and enlarges upon the misery of such of her acquaintance as are unhappily married.

“ 4th. Makes love to a young man without fortune, is unsuccessful, and rails openly against the whole sex.

“ 5th. Takes to cards and scandal, bestows her unclaimed sensibilities upon a tom-cat and a pug-dog, and exhibits a strong predilection for a methodist parson.



nifested in the purity and benevolence of their lives—the redeeming portion, in short, of our common nature. Gladly and triumphantly, with these convictions upon his mind, does he adduce the instance of Helen and Mary, in additional refutation, if any such were wanting, of the trite and flippant impertinences in which male cynics and sour misogynists have sometimes thought proper to indulge. It has been said that women are incapable of a steadfast and consistent friendship. That of Helen and Mary never suffered a moment's interruption; time, which generally weakens, if it does not sever, the attachments between men, only binding them together in a closer and more delightful intimacy. That a woman cannot keep a secret is another of the received canons of the sex-traducers. Helen did more; she abstained from prying into one, although the mystery that attended her friend's rejection of Barlow, and occasioned her subsequent impoverish-



would have been deemed much too eligible to be refused, could any considerations of a merely selfish or interested character have tempted them to break the resolution they had formed under the deliberate conviction of their judgment. From this they never swerved, not even in thought; and when years had rolled away, years of an uninterrupted friendship and happiness, such as seldom falls to the lot of mortals — when the foot of Time, however lightly he might have trodden, had stamped its impress upon their form and features, although the mind of each still retained its vernal freshness—when their bloom and beauty had faded, and they had so long been enrolled upon the list of old maids, that they were beginning to be called the old ladies, both of them were enabled to look back upon their life of “single blessedness,” not only without regret, but with the most fervent gratitude to Heaven for the lot that had been vouchsafed to them. Their



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to depend upon the parish rates for its support. Between these two extremes there is a yearly increasing population of females, of whom the far greater portion must inevitably be destined to a life of celibacy ; a defect in our social system, which would be more deplorable, did it not ultimately tend to cure itself. Upon the existing generation must fall the task of enduring this acknowledged evil ; and it is therefore especially incumbent upon them, for their own sakes, to disabuse themselves and the world at large of the silly and most illiberal prejudice against old maids, an injurious and ungenerous feeling, which, having been always utterly groundless, has now become not less impolitic than hateful.

Impartial observers will generally find in this calumniated class a more kindly and generous heart, as well as more enlarged views, than are commonly encountered among the wives. And it seems natural that this should be the

selves, they become mis-  
their minds acquiring a  
expansion from the ver-  
support, like the ivy, wh  
blossoms when it is prev  
any other body.

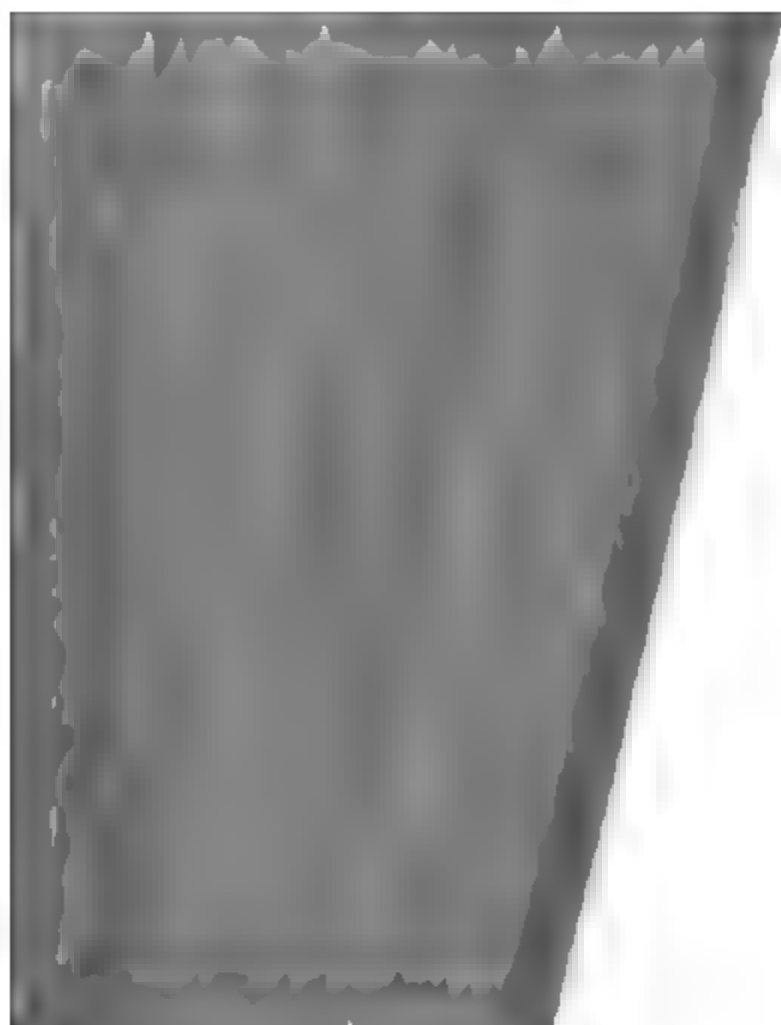
Married folks in Eng  
sidering themselves

" Born for the universe,  
And to party give up whi

*Their party is the family  
teric. Within the little o  
their acquaintance, there  
much domestic virtue ;  
that a rigid scrutinizer*

they are too apt to forget that society at large is only another word for relationship, and that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

Old maids, on the contrary, whose affections and thoughts have never been so strictly confined within the domestic pound, are more expansive in their sensibilities—more cosmopolitan and liberal in their views—more calm and disinterested in forming their opinions. Happy the family in which a maiden aunt or sister is regularly domiciliated! Free from the passions, and superior to the jealousies, which sometimes disturb the harmony of the best conducted household, she becomes the umpire of their little differences, the mediator between opposing parties, the restorer, by her own benign example, of all the charitable and kindly feelings; while her clear, impartial judgment enables her to discover and to recommend whatever may best conduce to the general



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in one of the most romantic situations of that picturesque district. That his house was the home of Helen and her friend, whenever they chose to render it such, it is scarcely necessary to state ; nor need we add that his ardent gratitude, his cheerfulness, and his intelligence, rendered him at all times a most acceptable companion to his visitants.

Other and more powerful attractions drew them frequently to his residence, for they did not number, in the wide circle of their acquaintance, a more friendly or fascinating person than Mrs. Ruddock. Originally an actress in a small provincial theatre, she added one more honourable example to the exceptionless list of those female performers, who having, in our own times, been raised by marriage into a higher sphere, have engrafted, upon the graces and endowments requisite for success in their first most arduous profession, all the proprieties and virtues that can adorn



one of the most exemplary, as well as the happiest, of husbands.

Nor did marriage and independence operate with a less beneficial effect upon Rose, whose morbid nervousness and timidity gradually subsided into the calm self-possession which was alone wanting to give full development to her genius and a consistent fascination to her manners. Besides assisting her husband in his literary undertakings, which he pursued with unabated ardour and success, she became a regular poetical contributor to several of the periodical publications, acquiring a merited reputation as a writer, while she felt an honest pride, in thus adding to their finances.

Although their cottage-door was opened by a "neat-handed Phillis," instead of a liveried footman, the most enlightened of the titled and the great, residing in the neighbourhood, a class which, in England, seldom fails to honour itself by honouring talents and virtue,



solution of securing the bulk of his fortune by settling it on his wife.

For this purpose trustees were to be named, but where to find them he knew not, for he had no friends, and not even an acquaintance from whom he was entitled to ask a favour of any kind. All through life it had been his great object to avoid the performance of the smallest social duty. Responsibilities, liabilities, or trouble on account of others, he had ever held in special abhorrence. *He* had never been trustee, or executor, or assignee; nay, he had repeatedly refused to witness a simple signature, lest it should expose him, at some future period, to some possible inconvenience. These selfish and cowardly evasions he called knowing the world; and he now found, by their declining to accede to his requests, that the world knew him.

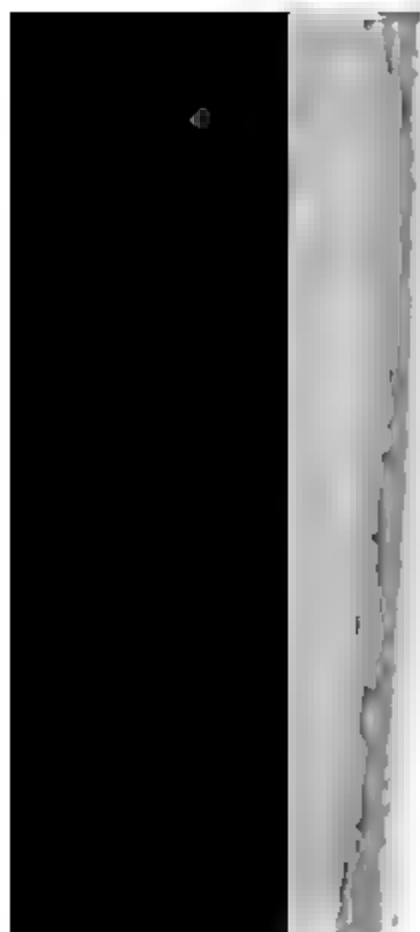
From motives of shabby economy, he employed a pettifogging attorney, who recom-

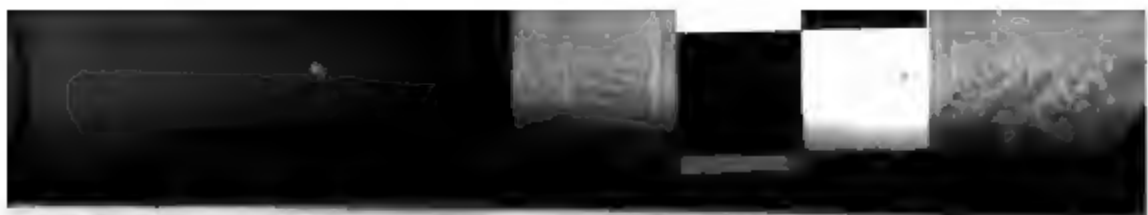


tor;" and that we cannot more surely serve ourselves than when, by serving others, we confirm the poet's assertion that "true self-love and social are the same."

THE END.

LONDON :  
F. ROBERT, JUN., LEICESTER STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.







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